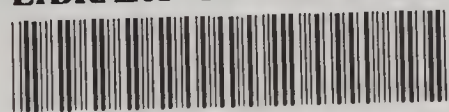


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LETTERS  
ON THE  
IRISH NATION:

WRITTEN  
DURING A VISIT TO THAT KINGDOM,  
IN THE AUTUMN OF THE YEAR 1799.

— Qualem decet esse Sororem.

---

By GEORGE COOPER, *Esq.*

OF THE HONOURABLE SOCIETY OF LINCOLN'S INN.

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3872 THE SECOND EDITION.

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M.DCCC.I.





# ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE

SECOND EDITION.

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THE very flattering reception which this work has already received from the public, induces the author to republish it in its present improved state.

Since the publication of the first edition, however, which is now a twelve-month, one of the most leading circumstances upon which it professes to treat, has undergone a most important change. This is the nature of the connection between Great Britain and Ireland. The

Legislative Union has received the final sanction of the parliaments of both kingdoms. But there is nothing in that measure, or in the consequences which have already ensued from it, that at all weakens the reasonings contained in the following pages. On the contrary, those effects, trifling as they yet are, operate as a powerful confirmation of them. I therefore present this Second Edition to the public with increased courage.

Neither have I neglected any thing which could render this impression as correct and perfect as possible. I have not only carefully watched the slow operation of varying circumstances, but have also listened to that free and enlarged discussion, both public and private, which preceded and accompanied them. From the additional lights which this examination af-



forded me, as well as from subsequent reflection, I have corrected every thing which appeared to me objectionable in the First Edition of the work, and added such fresh matter as I thought would tend to remove every possible obscurity.

It only remains for me to take this opportunity of acknowledging my obligations to my particular friend James Clarke, Esq. a Barrister of the Middle Temple, who accompanied me in my excursion to Ireland, and whose testimony therefore, if it were wanting in support of the justice of the observations made there, I am more particularly enabled to adduce, because they were in some measure suggested by himself.

*London, October 18, 1800.*



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## INTRODUCTION.

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IT has often been to me a subject of some surprise, when I have heard Irish affairs so much the topic both of public and private discussion as they have been of late, that the country itself should have been so little visited by travellers from Great Britain. The most remote corners of the Hebrides have been often explored, and the characters of our Northern neighbours an hundred times laid open to English curiosity. But though the name of Ireland is most familiar to our ears, yet the kingdom and its inhabi-

tants have been as little described as if the Atlantic had flowed between us, instead of dividing us both from the new world \*. The observation is somewhere in Swift, that few travellers think it worth their while to visit Ireland. What was true in his time, has continued so to the present period. It seems to have been blotted out of the geographical outline of European tours. I do not consider those who have been led there by the calls of interest or of honour, as forming any just objection to the truth of a general remark.

\* I have since met with a similar remark which comes from the very highest and best authority. Lord Chancellor Clare, in the speech which he delivered in the House of Lords in Ireland, on Lord Moira's motion, February 19, 1798, makes use of these words: "It is one of the greatest misfortunes of this country, that the people of England know less of it, than they know perhaps of any other nation in Europe." Page 84 of the speech printed by Wright.



Gentlemen of that description are included, by Sterne, within the class of travellers from necessity. Their objects are business, or military service, and if ever they move out of the sphere of those duties, it is entirely for their own pleasure: the literary world is never in the least instructed by it. There has not been a Chardin or a Rennell in Ireland. Setting aside then altogether this description of travellers, who, to confess the truth, have been hitherto by far too numerous for the advantage either of Great Britain or of Ireland; I think it will be conceded to me, that if we look over the list of tourists who have favoured the world with that knowledge which the indefatigable spirit of British inquiry has led them to collect in other countries, we shall be at a loss to discover why the



sister kingdom has been so strangely overlooked.

When I considered this circumstance, and at the same time felt a full conviction of the extreme interest which every subject of Great Britain must feel at the present moment in whatever relates to Ireland; I thought I could not better spend that season of recreation which the Autumn afforded me as a member of a learned profession—

———— cum jam non miscent jurgia leges,  
Et pacem piger annus habet, messesque reversæ  
Dimisere Forum \*;—

than in paying a visit to the undeservedly neglected Hibernia. I thought it a laudable curiosity to inquire a little into a nation, with which Great Britain was about to become most closely united.

\* Statius.

An Englishman's heart should not, even in war time, be separated, like his native island, from the rest of the world. There is a certain debt which every man owes to his country, as well as to his profession. I had often thought that a lawyer is too apt to consider himself excusable in complete indolence, when he has paid his necessary tribute of attention to the calls of his profession. His summer vacation, which might be profitably employed, is too frequently devoted to the merest inactivity, perhaps '*conchas et umbilicos ad Cajetam legere.*' If he joins in the dissipation of a public watering place, it is still less excusable. I determined to avoid both. I formed the resolution of dedicating a few leisure weeks to a personal examination into the state and condition of the Irish nation. The result of the obser-

vations and reflections which I made, when I was there, I now present to the Public in the following pages.

It must certainly be allowed, that nothing is more interesting, useful, and honourable, than the study of the government, the religion, the commerce, and the manners of a great nation. They form a large portion of the whole circle of human science. To understand them thoroughly, is only within the scope of such talents as must be combined to form both the statesman and the metaphysician. Looking back therefore on what I have attempted, I may say with Lord Bacon, that what I have written, appears  
' not much better than that noise or sound  
' which musicians make while they are  
' tuning their instruments, which is no-  
' thing pleasant to hear, but yet is a cause



‘ why the music is sweeter afterwards. So  
‘ have I been content to tune the instru-  
‘ ments, that they may play who have bet-  
‘ ter hands.’ Though I directed my atten-  
tion to these subjects whilst I was in Ire-  
land, yet I cannot aspire to be considered  
as more than a superficial observer. I ac-  
knowledge that the country presents other  
interesting objects to a visitor. It abounds  
with the greatest variety of natural curiosi-  
ties, and with that most enchanting rural  
scenery (more particularly in the county of  
Wicklow, over which I travelled) which  
the admirers of picturesque beauty go in  
search of. It would well exercise the pencil  
either of Pouffin or Salvator Rosa. But I  
could not persuade myself to fill my let-  
ters with descriptions of that sort. There  
were other objects which more engaged  
my attention; and interested my inquiries.

The state of the Irish kingdom had been the great subject of public discussion, ever since its Legislative Union with Great Britain was proposed. The principal arguments in favour of that measure were drawn from that topic. It was the Union therefore that attracted my attention to Irish affairs; which principally induced me to visit the country, and which afterwards bounded the nature of my inquiries when I was in it. Every fact which could tend to make up my opinion on that great contested measure, was an object to which my observations were principally directed.

I cannot pretend to assert, that every thing which I have said in the following Letters is altogether new, or that many of the observations have not even been made by other writers. I can only take to my-



self the merit of having ascended to the fountain-head of information, so far as having been in the country can entitle me to it, and no farther. Having made my remarks on the spot, and from a personal observation of facts, I may be considered as more peculiarly speaking, '*Ex Tripode*,' than other writers on the subject. All that has been said in England must have necessarily partaken in a great degree of the nature of abstract reasoning. What I have written, if not more correct, is at least more impartial. The looker-on not only sees more of the game than those who play, but can also judge of it much better. But it would be absurd, under every advantage, to aim at perfect originality, considering the very extensive discussion of Irish affairs which the Union

has led to. I cannot, however, conscientiously accuse myself of the least plagiarism. In studying a subject, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish one's own thoughts from those which originally belonged to other people. Where it can be done, no personal vanity should ever be suffered to interfere with the discharge of that important duty. But as I have been in a situation to see and not to read, to furnish my mind with the images of things, with original pictures, and not with mere copies or the representations of other men's ideas; I flatter myself that I do not stand exposed even to any suspicions of that sort.

It is a celebrated saying of the same great philosopher above mentioned, that a well written book compared with its rivals and antagonists, is like the serpent

of Moses, which immediately swallowed up those of the Egyptians. But having no rivals in my general design, there is not any necessity for my work undergoing so severe a trial. With respect to the discussion of the Union between the two kingdoms, which forms but a small portion of this work, and that only because it was incident to the proposed outline of it; I have not sufficient vanity to imagine that it will completely annihilate the many excellent publications on that subject. Neither am I of opinion that it ought to do so. I really think that so important a measure as that great legislative one in question cannot have been too much canvassed, and that the greater the number of understandings which were employed upon it the better.

As every man both judges and looks



either through a true or false medium, according to his education, his habits, and his prejudices, I cannot therefore omit mentioning, that I have always made it an object with myself, to bring my mind to a right understanding on certain leading principles of politics. What these leading principles are, and from whence derived, will be hereafter explained. The blaze of the French revolution, indeed, for some time dazzled my eyes, and the shock of it threw me, with many others, into confusion. Every thing which was bottomed in antiquity seemed by that splendid event (for it was splendid in its commencement) torn up by the roots. But I have long recovered myself from my amazement. I have once more recognized the principles of the old school. Through the medium of these principles,

I made my observations on the Irish government. It was, however, impossible for any man, even without a guide to prevent false impressions, to have mistaken his way in that country. The practical merits of the government might be there read in so unequivocal a language, that it was impossible to form an erroneous appreciation of them. The same optics, however, through which I did actually view Ireland and its government, I often contemplate the British nation. The more I survey it, the more I am delighted with the contrast. The more I reflect on my country, the more I am convinced of the truth of Montesquieu's observation—*‘ Que c'est le peuple du monde qui a le mieux su se prévaloir à la fois de ces trois grandes choses, la Religion, le Commerce, et la Liberté\*.*

\* De l'Esprit des Loix, l. xx. c. i.



I did not however undertake the task of visiting Ireland, for the sake of discovering abuses in its government, to inveigh against. My object was to find topics for admiration in the pursuit of truth. My mind was neither biased by national nor party prejudices. My political principles had neither been borrowed from the monastic notions which prevailed under the House of Stewart, nor fabricated in the warehouses of French democracy. I felt myself a friend to good government wherever it was to be found, and I looked on the British constitution as of the essence of it. But as to oppression and anarchy, whether it were in France or in Ireland, I beheld them both with equal regret and indignation.

On the subject of the religious differences of the Irish, I have carefully guarded

against making any observations which might be thought foreign to the subject. I have always espoused the cause of the party which I thought oppressed, without being attached either to the Catholic or to the Presbyterian persuasion. If the cause of religion has ever suffered in the eyes of mankind, it has been owing to mistaken and foolish zealots. I am sure I am not a member of that body. I have discussed the interests of the Catholics and Protestants in Ireland, in a political point of view, and not as a polemic divine. I have always endeavoured to reconcile, in my own mind, an high respect for the cause of religion, with but little concern for particular controverted doctrines. These, from their very nature, must always remain subjects of doubt and uncertainty. The combatants on these points,

says Voltaire, almost as if they were dancing a minuet, turn and shift and move about without ever advancing a single step, till at last they both find themselves at the identical spot from whence they first set out \*. But I had not any thing to do with them in the following inquiry, and therefore I have passed them by. If I have thought proper to mention them here, it was only lest I should be mistaken

\* ‘ Ne discutons point la foule de ces propositions qu’on peut attaquer et defendre long tems sans convenir de rien. Ce sont des sources intarissables de dispute. Les deux contendans tournent sans avancer, comme s’ils dansaient un menuet; ils se retrouvent à la fin tous deux en meme endroit d’où ils estoient partis.’

It would have been an happy circumstance for his country and for the whole christian world, if this lively and ingenious writer had preserved the same neutral indifference on religious points throughout all his discussions. We may smile at the bright effusions of his fancy, but we cannot but deplore the effects which they have produced.



for a superstitious missionary, who has written a whole volume in order to advocate the cause of his own conventicle in one chapter of it.

I have also said as little as possible on that grand common place for declamation, the progress of French principles all over Europe. I have left that subject to those who do not despair of rivalling Pitt in precision, or Burke in eloquence. That wonderful event, the French Revolution, as it has been felt, and still continues to be so, in the most opposite quarters of the globe, so has it called forth into action the greatest and most opposite talents. As Great Britain and Ireland have severely felt the shock of it, so have they been zealous in discussing the causes of. It was most especially felt in England, where ‘ grand swelling senti-



timents of liberty' have always been particularly listened to. I am sure it would be hypocrisy in me to deny how often I have been affected when I have met with the lofty glowing maxims of republicanism in the poets and orators of antiquity. I have felt all that 'glorying and inward triumph' at sublime passages of this sort, which every reader must have experienced upon such occasions. I hope I shall long continue to enjoy that pleasure. Is it therefore to be wondered at, that the heart should have been stimulated to take an active part in their favour, when they passed from the closet to the senate? Is it strange that the abhorrence which we so early have imbibed against ancient tyranny, and which the deliberations of our more mature age must lead to confirm in us, when we survey our own glorious con-

stitution, should have led men to rejoice at the French Revolution? at the political emancipation of thirty millions of men? But whatever were our raptures at the commencement of that event, the excesses which it has led to, have startled the most anxious friends of liberty. They have been obliged to pause, to reflect, and to discriminate.

This inward conflict has terminated in an endeavour to distinguish between sober, virtuous, and rational freedom; and that false lawless species of it which is in fact the worst of all tyrannies. It has also taught us the important lesson of discriminating between the real friends of liberty, and those who only use it as a cloak to cover other designs. The British nation will now acknowledge no other freedom than that which consists in per-

sonal security, personal liberty, and the protection of private property ;—that freedom which the law defines and supports.

With respect to the Irish rebellion, I endeavoured faithfully to get at the causes of it, both from my own individual inquiry, and from an examination of public documents. It was not my design to delineate the consequences, or to enter into any detail of the particular facts which arose out of that event. During my stay in Ireland, I had indeed ample materials for such an undertaking. But I thought that to trumpet them forth would come with a bad grace on the eve of an Union. I have always thought, and am still persuaded, that civil differences, like family ones, should be buried in oblivion. I think it is Quintilian who tells the story of a certain philoso-



pher offering to teach Themistocles the art of memory, to such an extent, that he should be perfectly able at all times to recollect whatever took place within the sphere of his observation. The illustrious Athenian however made answer, that it would be doing him a much greater favour to teach him *to forget rather than remember what he pleased!*—Let the party historians of Ireland take the hint. I hope that the design which was advertised in Dublin, whilst I was there, of blazoning out the details of that unhappy event, the rebellion, will be given up. When the interests of both parties are on the eve of adjustment, and I trust of reconciliation, particular past differences should receive a general amnesty. This seems to be the proper and natural death of civil dissensions.



Before I close these preliminary observations, I would fain make my peace with any gentleman who may be displeased with any thing which I have said of the people of Ireland in the following Letters. I have never been in the least personal, and general characteristics have always been allowed fair game for satire. But I must not be thought to assert a right merely because I have exercised it. I have never painted defects in hideous colours, or with the exaggeration of caricature; but merely as truth and impartial justice obliged me to do. I did not however find much occasion for censure of any sort. I look upon the people of Ireland as a brave and generous people. Their hospitality is conspicuous. In their deportment towards strangers, they are perfectly free and unreserved. There is a spirit of

frankness and an engaging sprightliness in their general demeanour which cannot fail to make impressions in their favour. I would not be thought to have made an ill use of the opportunities which I enjoyed of gaining all the information I could desire. They are a people I esteem, and I should be sorry to deserve the ill opinion of any individual amongst them.

I am confident that it is an undertaking of some difficulty, as well as delicacy, to inquire into the causes of public grievances and discontents. If a man happens to discover the real evil, he incurs the danger of being looked upon as the instrument of faction; if he fails in his researches, he is despised as a superficial and visionary libeller. If he approves of the conduct of government, he will be looked upon as its tool: if he condemns it, though he there-

by furnishes out that sort of repast which is always swallowed most greedily by the multitude; yet may that line of conduct as often be justly imputed to spleen or disappointment, as it deserves to be considered the language of impartial truth. There is as much of false liberty in malignant invective, as there is of servility in undeservingly paid adulation \*. As I disclaim both, I hope I shall not be suspected of either. Every man may step a little out of his ordinary sphere, when the affairs of a nation are distracted. It did not perhaps even require anticipation to look upon the affairs of Ireland as those of Great Britain, to examine into them narrowly, and to reason upon them freely, boldly and liberally.

\* Adulationi foedum crimen servitutis, malignitati falsa species libertatis inest. TAC.



With respect to the execution of this work, as it professes to be only an epistolary one, I hope that much apology is not required for it. Many graces of arrangement and diction have been sacrificed, to accommodate the time of publication to the political topic of the day. I have however been, to myself, a most severe critic \*. Whilst I have been revising these Letters for the Press, I have an hundred times resolved to abandon altogether the design of publishing them. I have even proceeded to tear my papers. But my courage at length has conquered my irresolution. But yet, after all, I should never have aspired beyond the obscurity of an anonymous writer, if I had thought that my name would be pledged

\* *Soyez vous a vous meme un severe critique,*

BOILEAU.



either for argument or style, and not merely for that regard to impartial truth and justice with which the Letters were written.

I conclude this Introduction (lest the prologue should be longer than the drama) with hoping that I shall not be thought to have been altogether travelling out of my profession. I should be sorry to be classed with the mere pamphleteers of the day, because I have assumed that character to fill up a few leisure hours. I have always been used to active pursuits, and had rather employ myself even about trifles, than drag out the time in unprofitable indolence. I trust, however, that the task I have ventured upon, will neither be considered trifling, nor uninteresting at the present period of time. I even hope that the importance of it will alone suffice to

excuse the defective execution of it. To be instrumental in restoring order and repose to a kingdom, so greatly distracted as Ireland has long been—to aim at promoting a good understanding between that nation and Great Britain, ‘in order that every thing should be sweetly and harmoniously disposed through both islands towards the conservation of their common liberties, commerce, and dominion’—is merely, in the attempt, an undertaking that would do honour to the brightest talents, and obtain pardon for the efforts of the meanest understanding. That object I have constantly had in view. But, had I done justice to the attempt, even if I had been able, (which I am sure nobody is farther from supposing than I am,) I should have been carried far beyond those bounds which I had prescribed to

myself. The torrent would have carried me away from all my professional avocations, instead of merely filling up a chasm in them. Had I stepped still more out of the way, I should like Atalanta have lost the race, and that too, perhaps, without picking up the golden apples. For, the more I thought of my subject, the more, I confess, I found the difficulties of it increase. I have therefore done little more than the merely sketching an outline. Such, however, as it is, I throw it as my mite into the rich bank of British Literature. Whatever may be its fate, the author is sure to satisfy every liberal critic, by confessing himself, in the words of the greatest poet that ever wrote,

ΝΗΠΙΟΝ, οὐπὼ εἰδοθ' ὁμοίου πολέμοιο,  
Οὐδ' ἀγορεύων, ἵνα τ' ἀνδρες ἀριπρεπὲς τελεθούσι.

*London, Nov. 1, 1799.*



LETTERS  
ON THE  
IRISH NATION.

---

LETTER I.

ON THE CHARACTER OF THE IRISH.

*My dear Sir,*

WHEN I last addressed you, I was prosecuting my journey through North Wales. I was studiously exploring the retreats and fastnesses to which our gallant ancestors retired in the last defence of their liberties. I felt happy in the midst of a brave and honest people. They have long enjoyed the

B



high character of combining individual integrity with public loyalty and attachment to England. There is no country where I could possibly have felt myself more at home. The Englishman who travels through it, will find the system of manners and the habits of life which prevail there, only so far differing from his own, as to furnish a pleasing variety to instruct and recreate the mind. He may there travel over classic ground without going far abroad for it, and find sufficient objects to enrich his imagination, improve his taste, and meliorate his heart.

I have now arrived in Ireland. With the spirit of curiosity raised to its highest pitch, having climbed the shaggy steep of old Snowdon, and wound back my way through the mazes, defiles, and passes, which abound in the romantic country

of the Ancient Britons; I left the royal towers of Caernarvon, the birth-place of the unfortunate Edward; crossed the famous strait which Tacitus has immortalized; and travelled across the island which was the last sanctuary of Druidical superstition, and the boundary of Roman conquest. At the opposite extremity of Anglesea I embarked for Dublin, to which favourable winds blew me safely over in twelve hours.

It will be the object of this letter to describe the contrast of character which I have met with in the sister kingdom. In my future letters I shall descend to other important particulars. But, in discharging this task, I must declare that it will neither be my inclination nor duty to apologise for any seeming prolixities. You have requested my observations on the Irish na-

tion, and I shall give them to you in such order, at such length, and moreover at such times, as my single judgment shall dictate. The government, the religion, the morals, and the manners, of a country, are the objects which attract a traveller's attention. In studying these, he will always find his best account. But the connexion of Ireland with Great Britain may extend the inquiry to the physical peculiarities of the country. The climate, the soil, and the natural beauties, will perhaps excite your curiosity; I shall, therefore, dispatch that subject in a very few words.

The difference of a single degree of latitude cannot, of itself, make the climate of Ireland differ much from that of England. But the bogs and morasses, which constitute the peculiar characteristic of the country, occasion an extraordinary moisture

and dampness of the atmosphere. Ireland may be justly called, in the words of Tacitus, ‘ *terra paludibus fœda.*’ I may even carry on the parallel with the description which that admirable writer proceeds in giving of ancient Germany. Its lands are almost entirely pasturage, and of course afford sustenance to prodigious flocks and herds. The perennial greenness of the country is therefore, on these two accounts, justly proverbial. But in the article of timber, there is an uncommon deficiency. I have heard it estimated, and I think with some appearance of truth, that there is as much wood in our single county of Kent, as in the whole kingdom of Ireland. When I add to these physical peculiarities, that the bays and harbours of Ireland are uncommonly picturesque, as well as commodious; that the Shannon is a



most noble river; that the lakes of Killybeg are the most enchanting in the world; and that Dublin, in population, magnitude, and the splendour of its public edifices, is the second city in his Majesty's dominions; you know all that is necessary to learn, or perhaps that is worth knowing, of the general appearance of the country.

Leaving, therefore, the detailed description of these particulars to those whose dispositions or leisure it may suit with to make them, I proceed to the more important task of inquiring into the character of the Irish people. I am sensible, however, that a discussion of this sort is attended with great difficulties. I trust you will, therefore, give me credit for entering upon it with becoming diffidence. He who flatters himself that the character either of

an individual, or of a nation, may afford an uniformity of virtuous and honourable qualities, without the alloy of any faults or defects, will find himself in the result greatly disappointed. To such a man therefore I do not address myself. ‘The web of our life (as Shakespeare somewhere remarks) is of mingled yarn, good and ill together. Our virtues would be too proud, if they were not counterbalanced by our vices; and our vices would be intolerable, if they were not chastised by our virtues.’

The characters, then, both of individuals and of nations, are alike chequered with beauties and deformities, with virtues and with vices. If we inquire into the causes from which these peculiarities flow, we shall find that it necessarily must be so. The infirmity of human nature is a plea

broad enough to palliate almost the greatest defects. But philosophers, when inquiring into the causes of national characters, have pushed their researches still farther. Though the most accomplished politicians, both of ancient and modern times, have been divided in opinion with respect to these causes; yet they all agree that the effects are necessary, invariable, and unalterable. Physical causes and moral ones have been alternately cried up. Mankind stood long contented with the authorities of Aristotle and his disciple Montesquieu, who laid great stress upon the former; but that opinion has been at length arraigned by the cool scepticism of Hume. That philosopher doubts altogether of the influence of physical causes\*. It is far from

\* This difference in the opinion of these great men may be seen by referring to Aristotle's Politics,



my intention to declare myself the advocate of either party, or to decide dogmatically on their respective merits. I should be happy were I able to reconcile them. It is a misfortune to mankind, when the great oracles of human wisdom contradict each other. Perhaps, however, in this case, as in most others, truth will be found in the medium, equally apart from both the extremes; and in choosing this course I am supported by considerable authorities.

The physical qualities of climate, air, and food, may certainly produce some effects on the national character; but I am inclined to consider them as very incon-

B. 4, with Montesquieu *De l'Esprit des Loix*, L. 14. who most ingeniously applies the notion of Aristotle, though without any mention of him: and Hume, in his *Essay on National Characters*, who contradicts them both, without noticing the name of either.



fiderable. ‘ By working insensibly on the tone and habit of the body, these peculiarities may perhaps influence in a small degree the temper and the passions.’ But whoever considers that the most opposite and inconsistent characters are often to be found under the same climate, and that, on the other hand, an uniformity of disposition and manners is sometimes seen in the most opposite extremes of heat and cold, will, I trust, be inclined to ascribe only a trifling effect to physical causes in producing national characters.—It is, then, to moral causes that we must principally resort, in accounting for the manners of a nation. These are enumerated by Hume to be the nature of the government; the revolutions of public affairs; the religion, the laws, the plenty or penury in which the people live; the situation of the

country with respect to its neighbours; and such like particulars. These are the circumstances which move the thoughts and the passions of men. Hence their sentiments and their habits are formed; and from hence their actions proceed. It is, therefore, from these sources that the general spirit of every civilized nation must principally take its rise.

In order to give you a distinct idea of this national character in the sister kingdom, it will be necessary to apprize you of a distinction of ranks unknown in England. It is not merely that strong line of demarcation which in all countries divides the rich from the poor: it is something more. The emigrations from Great Britain to Ireland have given rise to two classes of people in it, the colonists with their descendants, and the native Irish, the original inhabitants of

the country. To the first of these ranks is confined all the civil power of the state, both supreme and subordinate; all the property in it both landed and commercial; and all the education and refinement. It is not necessary that I should point out to you, how much the other class of the people must be separated from this first, when deprived of all these advantages. But the government, the established religion, and the laws, have added weight and force to this already formidable barrier. Reserving the general discussion of these particulars to a future opportunity, I shall content myself with remarking, that, notwithstanding these distinctions between the Irish people, there are certain features of national character in which they resemble each other. I shall, therefore, endeavour, first to point out this coincidence;



and then, by observations on each class separately, inform you of the particulars in which they differ.

Almost all philosophers have concurred in allowing to the passions a certain share in forming the human character, though some of them have denied their controul over a truly virtuous man. The severity of the Stoics, indeed, led them to declare, and even to define all passion as contrary to nature; and the splendid eloquence of Cicero has been exerted in giving weight to that opinion\*. But the progress of truth has at last fully shewn that these sublimated notions are inconsistent with the frailty of man. Aristotle (who opposed Plato in this as in all his other opinions) paved the way to a more mild and

\* See the fourth Tusculan Disputation of Cicero, chap. vi. et seq.



moderate system of philosophy. When the doctrines of the Peripatetic School had been long almost forgotten, a philosopher and historian was born in the bleak and frozen regions of the North, who has on this occasion undeservedly acquired the merit of originality in establishing the opinions of the Stagyrte\*. Whilst the unlearned Sophisters of the day thought that Hume was attacking them, they were unconscious that he was only wielding the weapons of Aristotle. By this system, whose basis is nature, and whose superstructure the most unanswerable reasoning, virtue is proved to be nothing more than the discipline of our natural feelings and affections into steady habits of right conduct. It does not consist in the extinction of the passions, but in the regulation of

\* See Hume's Principles of Morals.

them. Virtue is grafted on the stock of the natural affections: Reason, which is the presiding deity, is exalted over the heart, to govern by its dictates 'the little state of man.'

Perhaps it will be found, that all national characters differ in proportion to the degrees in which these two principles of reason and passion are found to preponderate. They constitute all the intermediate gradations between the civilized state and the inhabitants of New Zealand. They form even the extremes themselves. It is for this reason that the philosophers of all ages and in all countries are the same characters. We may certainly form to ourselves an idea of an angel without passions, but it is inconsistent with human nature. Merely to imagine an individual of this description, whatever might be the

perfection of the reason with which we suppose that he is endued, would be to picture to the fancy a tame, flat, insipid, sickly uniformity of character. On the other hand, the contrast is equally deplorable. For if the mind is not guided and steered by reason, it must inevitably, like a vessel which has lost its rudder, be driven at random by the tides of caprice, or tossed and shipwrecked by the waves of passion. It is therefore to the happy combination of both principles, to the just mixture of both ingredients, that all that is virtuous and ornamental in the human character is produced.

I think that I cannot give you a better general idea of the Irish character than by resorting to this system of metaphysics. It seems to me that the principle of passion bears a more than equal sway over that of

reason, with this people. They are indued with warm hearts, strong feelings, and that peculiar force of natural sentiment which I consider as capable of being exalted, by the wisdom of legislation, into a most amiable national character. But that which ought only to enliven and impassion the understanding, is left to vegetate unpruned in all the wanton exuberance of nature. It is not sufficiently under the controul and discipline of reason and moral habit. The consequence is, that it leads to many faults, at the same time that it constitutes many virtues in their characters. I shall point out to you how this haughty principle displays itself in the Irish nation.

I. 1. This is first in a great national pride and an high conceit of the political rank of their country in the list of nations,



and of each individual of it as an important member of society. It cannot be dissembled that they are a vain-glorious and a boasting nation. The popular vanity of the whole can only be equalled by the family pride of each individual. They are equally ridiculous in their genealogical calculations, and their hyperbolical encomiums on their country. Their historians have traced up the pedigree of their country to a period much earlier than the chronological records of civilized society extend. They will allow, that the '*vixere fortes ante Agamemnona*' of Horace, is at least true, if applied to Ireland. They inform you, that it was flourishing in learning and civilization, whilst all other nations were obscured in ignorance and barbarism. Europe and America are contented to acknowledge their gratitude to

Phœnicia, for bestowing on them the benefits of letters and religion. But the generality of the Irish historians forming a solitary exception to this general acquiescence of modern nations, have inverted the ordinary progress of civilization, by asserting that their country was in the enjoyment of it prior to the Assyrian or oldest of the four monarchies of the ancient world.\* They assert that Egypt and

\* This is calculating according to Sir Isaac Newton's Chronology. Sir William Jones has however demonstrated that a powerful monarchy was established in Iran or Persia in its largest sense, *'long before the Assyrian or Pishdadi government*; that it was in truth a Hindu monarchy, though he says that if any choose to call it Cusian, Casdean, or Scythian, he will not enter into a debate on mere names; that it subsisted many centuries, and that its history has been engrafted on that of the Hindus, who founded the monarchies of Ayodhya and Indraprestha; that the language of the first Persian Empire was the mother of Sanscrit, and consequently of the Zend and Persi, *as well as of Greek, Latin, and Gothic*. (See his sixth Discourse to the Asiatic Society.)—Words would be wanting to ex-

Phoenicia received the arts and sciences from the great ancestor of the Irish nation. This people, so polished in the remotest periods of antiquity, may therefore consistently lay claim to the honour of being the *fathers of letters*\*. The beauty and fertility of their country are equally the objects of their commendation. They will tell you that whatever is celebrated for beauty in history or fable, is but a faint

press the esteem and veneration which I feel for this Columbus in literature. As a linguist he can only be compared to the celebrated Giovanni Pico, a nobleman of Mirandula, in the age of Lorenzo de Medicis. But as a chronologist, an antiquary, an astronomer, a theorist in music, an elegant poet, superadded to his acquirements as a lawyer, he has no parallel. This finished model of intellectual and moral excellence is now no more:

Dear son of memory, great heir of fame,  
What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?

\* See O'Halloran's History, and Ierne defended by the same author. 4to, 1774.

picture of what is to be seen in Ireland. I have found amongst them more Rudbecks than the university of Upsal ever produced\*. As that celebrated professor assured the Swedes in his work called the *Manheim or Atlantica*, that the ‘*Atlantis of Plato, the country of the Hyperboreans, the gardens of the Hesperides, the Fortunate Islands, and even the Elysian Fields, were all, but imperfect transcripts of the delightful region of Sweden;*’ so are the Irish equally lavish in their encomiums on Ireland. It was but the other day that I accidentally fell into company with a professor of their university of Dublin, and the conversation turning on the respective merits of Great Britain and Ireland in the above-mentioned particulars, I found it

\* Some account of Rudbeck may be found in Gibben’s History, chap. ix.



impossible to convince him that London was a finer city than Dublin, or that England in fertility and cultivation could at all be compared with Ireland. I left him to the peaceable enjoyment of his own opinion.

Something has also been hinted of the pride of pedigree displayed here by individuals. The Irishman in this respect far exceeds all other nations. ‘He can point out the individual son of Japhet from whose loins he is lineally descended.’ I remember to have somewhere read, that in the reign of Edward the second, an Ulster prince made a public boast of having succeeded to near two hundred kings of Ireland, his lineal ancestors, down to the year 1170. Would you imagine that the genealogical tree of the meanest individual has an almost equally deep root? The fact is undoubtedly so.

With this spirit, and with a similar boast of ancestry, a kitchen-wench in the service of the celebrated bishop of Cloyne refused to carry out cinders, because she was descended from an old Irish stock \*. I might weary you with details of this sort, but I content myself with assuring you that there is no nation whose legendary tales about their country and kindred are so extravagant and ridiculous as those of the Irish. The English have been laughed at by foreigners for their predilection in favour of their own country. But an Englishman's vanity proceeds from a conviction of the acknowledged superiority in the constitution, the laws, the commerce, and the enjoyment

\* See Bishop Berkeley's work entitled, 'A Word to the Wise; or, Letter to the Roman Catholic Clergy of Ireland.'

of the comforts of life, which his country enjoys over all the world. The utmost paroxysms of his pride on these accounts, are sobriety and moderation themselves, when compared with those of the Irishman. I do not, however, mention this leading feature in the character of the Irish nation, as an unpardonable folly. On the contrary, I acknowledge it to be, in the abstract, and without reference to its consequences on industry, an harmless and innocent prejudice. I am not ignorant that, generally speaking, there is an ‘habitual, native dignity’ inspired by the idea of a liberal descent, which is admirably calculated for the prevention of crime, and the preservation of a rational and manly virtue. Not but that an enlightened education, and an acquaintance with the laws of humanity, will give a

superior elevation to the soul, to all the prerogatives of nobility, and all the pride, and pomp, and boast, of heraldry. It would even be better to infuse into the minds of a nation the spirit of life and energy, than the pride of ancestry, however refined and subtilized. All I contend for is, that the vanity of a noble descent may co-operate with the greatest talents and learning, and where they are wanting will often supply the place of them.

2. But I turn with pleasure from the laughable excesses to which this trait of Irish character leads, to one that I could expatiate upon with pleasure as a scholar, and with gratitude as an English subject. I mean that heroic courage, that most splendid of all qualities, which has long adorned the people of this country. Not that I imagine it proceeds either from any



principle of self-preservation, or sense of duty, which they have; but from that pride, that love of distinction, and that warmth of temper which so much distinguishes them. All the world must agree, that the Irish are a brave and warlike people. They may be slaughtered or dispersed in the field of battle, but their spirit can never be tamed. Their minds are capable of being wound up to the highest pitch of fortitude; and their bodies are hardy, robust, and equal to the greatest fatigue. Their courage, indeed, is certainly not that just medium between rashness and pusillanimity, which a philosopher would admire. It is too much influenced by passion, and too little by the cool dictates of reason and reflection. For true fortitude can alone be seen in exploits which are not only warranted by justice, but also

guided by the dictates of wisdom. But this is not the character of Irish courage: it is more of 'towering phrenzy and distraction.' The consequence is, that it has chiefly been found serviceable when made subordinate to order and strict discipline. It is of itself generally unfit to resolve before it executes. For this reason, the Irish have always distinguished themselves in the subordinate stations in our fleets and armies, but seldom when possessed of supreme power. They have always succeeded to admiration where mere boldness has been looked for. They are gifted with that enterprising character which disregards all obstacles, or only considers them as so many incentives to exertion.

A characteristic naturally connected with this philosophical defect (for it is no

more) in the bravery of the Irish, is, that they are hasty and impetuous, rash and choleric, and subject to the most violent attacks of anger and passion. This irascible temper has created in the English an habit of cautiously avoiding too great a degree of intimacy with them. When heated with wine, of which they are immoderately fond, there is no description of people more quarrelsome or dangerous. Drinking, instead of promoting harmony, and conviviality, too frequently leads them into broils and encounters. Even the merry-making of the peasant generally ends in bloodshed. But this is, in some degree, to be attributed to that generous warmth and openness of temper, to that boldness, both in speech and action, which, when heightened by the juice of the grape, pours out the senti-

ments of the heart in the most unguarded manner. There is an observation of my favourite author, Lord Chancellor Bacon, which irresistibly forces itself on my mind whilst I am on this subject: ‘Wine (says he) is of a common nature with all the passions, and will be found to kindle and excite each of them in an equal degree.’ When, therefore, the natural disposition of the Irishman receives this artificial irritation, the result must necessarily be such as I have described it.

3. The same disposition which displays itself in the manner I have above related, shews itself also among the Irish in another amiable point of view. This is in a spirit of liberality and generosity, which I have seldom seen equalled. The hospitality and munificence which they display towards strangers, is, I think, if not un-



equalled, at least not exceeded, in any European country. That reserve towards strangers, which alike characterises the Englishman and his mastiff, is unknown in Ireland. An accidental rencontre on the public road, often leads to the utmost hospitality: I have myself more than once experienced the benefit of this quality, under circumstances of that nature. The liberality displayed towards their guests at their tables is indeed so extreme as to be frequently prejudicial to their fortunes. But it is obvious that there is a degree of ostentatious vanity which has some share in leading them to these excesses: and their quickness in forming friendships is attended with that general consequence which accompanies this disposition, a proportionate shortness in the duration of their attachments.

4. But there is a trait in their dispositions and manners somewhat connected with this hospitality, and which often serves as a foil to it. This is an excessive love of gaming, no where indulged to greater lengths than in Ireland. This spirit for play is not confined to the higher classes of individuals as in England, but extends to the poorest and meanest of the people. The effect which it produces on their conduct, conversation, and behaviour in social life, has been to me a matter of inconceivable amazement. I happened to be in Dublin when the State Lottery was drawing, and if it had been necessary to convince me how pernicious an expedient this is for raising money for the use of the government, I should have there met with it. The crowds which are drawn in this vortex are inconceivable;

old and young, rich and poor, gentleman and beggar, are alike avowed candidates for the favours of the blind goddess. In England, the laws guard against many of the evils which this invention has been found to produce: the refinement of manners is still an additional guard against them. But in Ireland these laws do not exist; and manners form no barrier to supply the want of them. I have heard gentlemen in the most fashionable circles of polite company, openly exult at their gains, even by the insurance of lottery-tickets. Indeed, speculations of that nature cannot any where else be carried on to such an extent. Perhaps, too, I may add to this, that the profession of a gamester is more confined to the natives of Ireland, than of any other portion of his Majesty's dominions.

But the effects of this gaming expedient for raising money, are still more conspicuous amongst the lower classes of the people. The public streets of Dublin are filled with lottery-offices, beyond the conception even of a Londoner. These shops are adorned with every thing which can catch the eye, and delude the mind of the unwary. They are filled with crowds of the most miserable ragged objects (of which Dublin, perhaps, contains more than any other city in Europe), staking their daily bread on the chance of gain. I have often observed in London the multitudes of poor people, who are plundered by the keepers of lottery-offices. I have often heard of the families of industrious mechanics and manufacturers driven by their frauds into the streets to beg their bread. I have even known old



servants- plundered of the ‘ thrifty hire saved in a life of service.’ But yet these are all trifles when compared with the extent to which the evil of lottery-offices is carried on in Ireland. They are there an insult to the eye of public decency. The immense fortunes also, which I understand are often suddenly amassed by the keepers of these gaming-houses, are incredible. To my mind, this open pillage of the public is an outrage committed on every principle of morality, of moderation, and of the spirit and object of laws.

When I add to these general characteristics of the nation their excessive credulity, which has always been imposed on by those who have been base enough to take advantage of it, and which has so often made them the dupes of political innovators and artful demagogues, I con-

sider that I have nearly fumbled up every thing which I had to say on this part of my subject.

II. These, then, are what I consider to be the most striking traits of that character which is common to all ranks and descriptions of people in Ireland: they constitute what may perhaps be called the general manners of the nation. You will, therefore, next expect of me, that I should discuss separately, the two classes into which I have divided the people, in order to point out the differences in their characters.

I. In these, the effect of moral causes is most conspicuously displayed. All the higher ranks of the people have emigrated from England or Scotland, and obviously carry about them those distin-

guishing marks which a mother country always produces on her sons, and which a vicinity of situation, and constant correspondence with them, must perpetually keep alive.

This distinguishes the nobility and gentry of Ireland, by a degree of civilisation and refinement in their manners, unknown to the majority of the people. It produces a similitude of manners with the English nation, to the extent of the communication between the two countries. Our universities of Oxford and Cambridge, particularly the former, abound with Irish students; and our four inns of court in London, are thronged with them. This residence in the metropolis and the seats of learning in England, produces that urbanity of manners which sometimes almost melts down the Irish gentleman into

an English one, and must also extend the influence of education, and the refinement of manners, throughout the circle of friends and relatives at home.

2. In this English school are formed the individuals who compose the Irish legislative and judicial bodies. On these two theatres, the houses of parliament and the bar, it must be allowed that many shining characters have been exhibited; and that many still continue to merit the applause and admiration of the world. As almost every gentleman in Ireland considers the education of his son incomplete without sending him to study three years in the Temple, it necessarily follows, that the members of their parliament and their barristers are blended together in education and character. Indeed it is well known that one third of the house of



commons has generally been practising lawyers, or at least gentlemen who have been regularly trained up to the profession. For in Ireland, as well as in England, the profession of the law now takes place of the church, and is at present that same road to dignity and promotion which the latter was a few centuries ago. Perhaps it is even more so in Ireland than it is in England. At any rate, however, it will appear, from what is above mentioned, that the number of candidates who venture for the prizes of the profession is here in by far the greatest proportion of the two kingdoms. The observations, therefore, applicable to the talents which are displayed in the courts of justice, are perfectly applicable to those which the parliament affords the field for.

3. To the honour of Ireland, it must be

acknowledged that the integrity and purity of character of those who have presided over the administration of justice in the kingdom, has always been unblemished and irreproachable. If they have sometimes been accused of suffering the violence of party-spirit to influence their professional conduct, they have never been in the slightest degree even suspected of the least corruption. The voice of calumny herself has, in this respect, been forced to be silent. And it is probable that the first charge is unfounded, and is the mere effect of mutually recriminating factions. But the disinterested display of great talents in the service of their country, is a glory which most of their judges may deservedly lay claim to. It must also be confessed, that there is often much learning, and still more talent, to be found

amongst those who fill the secondary ranks in the profession of the law. I cannot dissemble my sentiments. It seems to me that there are not many of that forensic rabble\*, that mechanical order of practitioners; that half-witted, quibbling, over-technical class of lawyers, ‘who grovel all their lives in a mean but gainful application to the little arts of chicanery†.’ I am inclined to think that the nature of the Irish character renders it almost impossible to find the narrow-minded ‘*cantor formularum, auceps syllabarum vel acutus præco actionum*’ against which, as applied to the lawyers of modern times, the keen ridicule of Cicero has so justly been directed. It is proba-

\* Rabula forenfis. CIC.

† Bolingbroke.

bable, too, that this satire is more applicable to Westminster Hall than it ever was to the Roman Forum. But the bent of the minds of Irish lawyers leads them in a widely different direction. There will be found at the Irish bar individuals of that enlarged education which tends to form orators, philosophers, and statesmen: there will be discovered at it men who have climbed to what Bolingbroke calls ‘the vantage ground of science.’ Their indiscriminate application to all the walks of the profession (so carefully avoided in England) gives them an enlarged and comprehensive knowledge, rather than that which is nicely accurate and particular. Add to this, the warmth and energy of the Irish character greatly tends to form the true orator. It gives him that empaffioned style of declamation



which is of the very effence of the real talent for perfuafion. All high eloquence muft flow from paffion. There is a coldnefs and torpor in the Englifh character, a dull, tame fluggifhnefs in the nation, which is incompatible with true oratory. Perhaps we have feldom produced fuch animated fpeakers as Flood and Curran. Let me not be mifunderftood. I am inclined to queftion whether they do not ftand unrivalled by the Englifh in that florid ftile of eloquence, of which imagination and paffion form the principal ingredients. Rational, argumentative orators we have in abundance. Our fenate and courts are crowded with lawyers and ftatefmen of folid learning and real genius, who therefore fteer clear of that empty declamation, that ‘ bald unjointed chat,’ and verbose counterfeited ap-

pearance of knowledge\*, which must so often characterize the Irish orator. I must speak the truth of my country, however I may *feel* prejudiced in its favour. We have often produced a Coke and a Blackstone, but never a Cicero or an Hortensius. Our English lawyers too will be often found to have inherited much of the subtilty, and even of the chicanery which characterized their Norman ancestors. They are not altogether unpractised in those illaqueating subtilties and fine spun webs of finesse which entrap and ensnare the understanding. It is true, that with all these draw-backs we often hear oratory in England in which every thing that learning can afford is adorned by the splendid trappings and embellishments of rhetoric. But although there are many exceptions

\* Verbosa simulatio prudentiæ. Cic.

to the remark, yet it will generally be found that this is a exotic talent. It is seldom of English growth. It has either emigrated from Ireland, or descended from the bleak mountains of Caledonia. Murray was a Scot; and Burke was of the sister kingdom.

4. But to return from the appreciation of talent to the consideration of manners: there is a striking peculiarity in the Irish character which it is almost impossible that you should have overlooked; I mean that romantic gallantry towards the fair sex, that chivalrous spirit, which has always so highly distinguished and marked the Irish nation. The warmth of their tempers will partly account for it. Their obligations to the feudal system, and its attendant chivalry, which has contributed so much towards the refinement of modern

manners, will account for the rest. That military system which our ancestors were so familiar with, is itself no more. It now strikes us with that same veneration and awe which the view of the ruins of the abbies and monasteries which were founded under it, and of the castles and fortresses which composed a part of it, are so well calculated to inspire. But the consequence which this system has entailed on posterity will perhaps be never eradicated. It is questionable whether they ought to be so; notwithstanding the grains of alloy they carry with them. They have found an eloquent champion in Edmund Burke; and, with reference to Ireland, his beautiful encomiums are peculiarly just and applicable. He knew full well that the impassioned character of his countrymen had been materially



softened and adorned by the influence of this benign principle. It has made them men of the nicest honour, and lovers of the most engaging kind. The company of the fair-sex has been there formed by the influence which chivalry has left behind it, into the grand school for all those mild and amiable virtues which they may be said to be possessed of. It has been made the source of all their politeness, and of all the gentleness of manners, purity, patience, and observance, of which they can possibly boast.

5. The ancient world were strangers to this romantic kind of attachment to women; but it must also be remembered, that they were strangers to the abuses of those laws of honour which chivalry has left behind. Against these laws moralists cannot too much declaim, or legislators

too carefully guard. In proportion to the influence which they obtain, it has been invariably found that all other laws and regulations are weakened and undermined. In France, where this principle was carried to its highest pitch, it is well known that the most wanton attacks on private happiness were considered as no reproach to the character of a gentleman. Seduction and adultery were carried on in the spirit of the old knight-errantry, and in the most open and unreserved manner. Indeed the fair-sex always appreciated their consequence by the number of suitors in their train. Gallantry, which is perhaps but another name for chivalry, seemed to have altered even the unalterable nature of virtue itself, amongst the people of France under the old government. It created new merits, and glossed over old vices.\* How

\* This is well depicted by a keen and satirical

far the revolution in politics which has been effected will alter them in these respects, experience alone can demonstrate.

Setting aside for our future correspondence the subjects of the religious and political differences of the Irish, I cannot better account for the slack system of mo-

observer of human nature, although in this respect, like the Roman historian Sallust, his own life was not the best commentary on the excellent precepts with which his writings abound. The gay, the debauched Voltaire observes, ‘ Ne remarquez vous pas que toute société s’empresse a chasser un coquin, de qualité ou non, qui est surpris trompant au jeu, ne s’agirait’il que de quelques pistoles ? tandis que toute société se fait devoir de protéger, de sauver, d’aider tous les coupables *des deux crimes les plus funestes au genre humain, le duel and l’adultere ?* On se pique de protéger ces deux delits, dont l’un détruit les défenseurs de l’état, et l’autre donne a tant de peres de familles, a tant de princes, des heretiers qui ne sont pas leurs enfans ! Ne trouvez vous pas les barbares Turcs beaucoup plus sages *que nos barbares polis occidentaux ?* Les Turcs ne connoissent ni la vaine gloire du duel, ni la galanterie de l’adultere. Ne conviendrez vous pas d’ailleurs qu’il est des delits qu’il faut toujours tâcher d’ignorer ? (Prix de la justice, &c. art. 4.)



ality which is so observable in Ireland, by any other principle than the one above mentioned. There is a profaneness, a neglect of public worship and private devotion, a cruel oppression of the tenantry, and a general want of charity towards the poor, more striking amongst the Irish gentry than any where I ever saw or heard of. Religion has done little or nothing towards the civilization of the Irish. To it, as a softener and improver of their manners, they may well renounce all obligation. But though I have pictured this general state of immorality, yet there is one particular to which in justice to their character I must acknowledge that the charge does not apply; I allude to conjugal infidelity; instances of which are much less frequent than in England. The women have the character of being virtuous; I



am sure I should be sorry by any insinuation to rob them of that brightest jewel in the female character. That they are many of them beautiful I have seen and often felt, and that they are chaste I most fully believe: But the evil of chivalry, (for I am on the subject, and must proceed with it,) which has not extended to the corruption of the women, has made full amends for the deficiency by the ravages it has made, in this particular, in the characters of the men. Although their debaucheries may not be so evident in their own country, yet in England and in foreign nations they have always been highly distinguished for them.

The reason of this state of immorality, particularly with reference to its effects on the lower orders of society in Ireland,

such as I have described them, has been well given by an excellent philosopher. ‘The laws of honour,’ says he, ‘only prescribe duties *towards equals*, without attending either to those which are due to the Supreme Being, or to our inferiors\*.’

I conclude the observations which suggest themselves to my mind on the character of the higher class of people in Ireland, with remarking, that there is not only a general neglect of religion amongst them, but even a frequent derision of it in others. This derision mounts into persecution, where the religion professed by others happens to differ from that which is established by law. The rich have all the intolérance of bigots, without any of their piety. I think that you will agree

\* Paley.

with me, that these are sufficiently striking traits of character to distinguish the wealthy from the lower classes of the people in Ireland.

III. It is in general remarked, and with great truth, that the manners of a nation alter considerably from one age to another; either by revolutions in government, by the mixture of strangers amongst them, or even by that inconstancy to which all human affairs are subjected by nature. But perhaps this observation will be found to be exclusively inapplicable to three-fourths of the Irish nation. As the earliest records of the commencement of the connexion between the two countries inform us that they then were—so will they be found at present—an illiterate and uncivilized people. I pass over their legendary tales of antient refinement, having nothing to do

with a period three thousand years before Christ, which rests upon little more than oral tradition. I have observed that the relative situation of one state with another, must, without doubt, have great influence on the manners, and even sentiments, of both nations. Civilization has gradually travelled from the South to the North; opposing itself, as it were, to the ordinary progress of conquest. Asia taught Europe, giving lessons to Greece her first-born child; and that lovely female, the darling pride of nature, communicated her knowledge to Italy. The conquerors of the world spread civilization through Gaul, till at last it reached the most northern points of Britain. Thule, at last, has indeed had her historians and rhetoricians\*.

\* *Gallia confidicos docuit facunda Britannos,  
De conducendo loquitur jam rhetore Thule.*

Juv. Sat. 15.



The relative situation of one state with another has thus always demonstrated its influence on the manners, and even sentiments, of its neighbour. France has certainly operated considerably, in these respects, upon England. It is said, and with truth, to have forwarded our refinement, directed our taste, and, in every sense, to have been a cradle and nursery to the nation——*gentis incunabula nostræ*.

This principle will well account for that portion of civilization which I have observed is actually found amongst the rich and powerful in Ireland. Our colonists have carried it over from the mother country, and the education of the child has followed up that of the parent. But this refinement of manners has never crept into the great mass of the people. Other nations have advanced in all the arts of

polished life by insensible degrees; but the bulk of the Irish nation is still almost at a stand. The natives of that country, the descendants, as it seems probable, of its aborigines, still remain the same rude barbarians that our earliest accounts describe them. I shall have little difficulty in describing this character, as it may be depicted in the same few words with that of all nations who have been seen in a state of ignorance and barbarity.

1. If we study the manners of the ancient Germans, in Tacitus; or of the Tartar tribes, as described by the French missionaries and travellers; or of the modern American Indians, as they have been often seen by our colonists in the North, and circumnavigators in the South; it is impossible that we should not be struck with the resemblance which they bear to each other.

The cause may be traced to the plain and simple operations of nature. ‘As the appetites of a quadruped,’ says Gibbon, ‘may be more easily ascertained than the speculations of a philosopher; so the savage tribes of mankind, as they approach nearer to the condition of animals, preserve a stronger resemblance to themselves and to each other. The uniform stability of their manners is a natural consequence of the imperfection of their faculties. Reduced to a similar situation, their wants, their desires, their enjoyments, are all the same.’ Some speculative writers in considering this subject have gone so far as to say, that perhaps it would sometimes be an happy circumstance if a certain depravity in human nature did not prevent a perfect similitude between the barbarian and the process of instinct in the brute creation. It

It must undoubtedly be conceded that there are certain advantages which instinct must be allowed to possess, even over the most boasted refinements of civil society. It was the opinion of Plutarch, that the simplicity to be met with in the actions of our fellow-creatures, shews nature pure and untainted ; neither disguised with art, nor clouded with passion ; neither dashed with philosophy, nor corrupted with a multiplicity of contradictory opinions \*. The celebrated philosopher of Geneva would no doubt have coincided in this sentiment. Indeed he seems to have proceeded upon it in several of the extraordinary opinions respecting the state of nature, which he has published to the world. If simplicity in morals or in politics is indeed the criterion of excellence, we shall find that if

\* De amore prolis.



we carry the analogy from the brute to the vegetable creation, it is there still farther discernible. It is obvious that the vegetable world is in a manner tied down by the root to preserve an uniformity of nature, without sense or even instinct to mislead it. But these analogies are absurd in their application and dangerous in their consequences. It is the object of morality to lift human nature still higher than it is, rather than to debase it still lower. But morality is insufficient for this purpose without the aid of religion. Unassisted reason is the most fallacious of all guides. Although it is styled the great director of the human species, it is always hunting after new roads to happiness and is never content with the old ones ; a sufficient proof (if proof were wanting) of its complete inadequacy and insufficiency.

But to return from this digression, into

which the hypothesis of Plutarch insensibly led me, it will not require that great writer's zeal for parallelism to discover almost the same traits of character in the poor peasantry of Ireland, which distinguish every uncivilised people. The influence of nature has not been subdued, but in many respects perpetuated, by the operation of moral causes. And yet this is extraordinary, when we come to consider the subject. Africa, Tartary, and Siberia, have always been countries in a state of barbarism; and the reason which has been assigned for it by Adam Smith is, that 'they are inland countries, neither inclosing large seas and gulfs in their bosoms, like the Baltic and Mediterranean, nor rivers capable of carrying commerce and communication through them by the means of navigation.' But Ireland is bountifully supplied by Providence with

almost every advantage of this sort. Her harbours are almost innumerable, and her navigable rivers superior, both in number and magnitude, to those of Great Britain. How her semi-barbarism (as it has been called) should then still exist, may appear inconceivable. But I shall explain this seeming paradox in my two next letters. At present I content myself with observing, that, though the condition and manners of the Irish do not present us with that appearance of an associated band of warriors which the political society of the German tribes formerly gave them, and which is still seen in North America; nor with that pleasing idea of a numerous and increasing family, which the Tartar tribes have always suggested to the mind of the philosopher; although they more approximate to the degraded state of a horde of Hottentots: yet I am persuaded, that in

the three important articles of habitation, diet, and disposition, there will be found a great resemblance. If the effects of government and religion could be suspended, the parallel would be perfect. They would, under different circumstances, present us with the picture of the shepherd and of the warrior.

2. The Irish peasant lives in a low, narrow hut, called a cabin; which is built of the fligthest materials, cemented with clay, and thatched with straw. It is generally without glass to its windows, or a door to shut out the wind and rain. It seldom enjoys the convenience of a chimney, so that the smoke is seen ascending through every quarter of the roof. In this cold and comfortless habitation, the two sexes promiscuously herd together. These narrow precincts must not only afford shelter to a wife and family, but they



must also inclose within them his *live stock*, if indeed the peasant rises in worldly fortune to the possession of a cow or a pig. These enjoyments of *property* are thus, like all other human advantages, tempered with a proportionate share of inconveniences. They deprive him of so much room in his cabin. The whole *family* are obliged to live under the same roof. Children and pigs may indeed, and always do, eat, drink, and sleep together. But a stall must be provided for a cow, by portioning off part of the cabin. The peasant, though he may possess half a rood of land, cannot parcel it off for the purpose, because it would rob him so far of the source of his subsistence. This naturally leads me to consider that subject.

3. The diet of the Irish peasantry is chiefly vegetables; his subsistence depending on a small spot of ground, which he

generally sows with potatoes. Bread, which constitutes the ordinary and wholesome food of a civilised people, he is almost a stranger to. It can only be obtained by agriculture, which is here at its lowest ebb; the lands being, as I have before observed, almost wholly thrown into pasture for cattle. But perhaps it might therefore be reasonably expected, that the peasant would often enjoy the nourishment of animal food. But the fact is otherwise: he is almost a stranger to it. His poverty will not allow him to live upon that which is one of the great trading commodities of the country. If he possessed cattle, he must sell them to make up his heavy rents: when he is without them, where can he obtain the means of purchasing them? The consequence of this is, that the peasant starves in the midst of plenty. Whilst the beast of the field is

fattened, the man is often seen famishing. And yet, notwithstanding this scarcity of animal food, and entire dependence on roots for subsistence, it must be confessed that the peasantry are naturally an healthy and robust race of men. Their limbs are well formed, and they possess great strength of body. The medical world may with reason consider these two circumstances as convincing proofs, that a vegetable diet is at least as fully congenial to nature as any other.

4. If we proceed from these external circumstances to examine the furniture of the peasant's mind, his disposition, and the qualities of his heart; we shall find him miserably destitute of fear, reason, and often of humanity. His poverty and oppression necessarily make him a prey to the mean and ferocious vices. He is the slave of ignorance and superstition, which



will generally be found inseparably connected together. The Roman Catholic priest is the petty tyrant of each village. But his authority does not create that religious, orderly, decent, and dignified conduct which Christianity produces in England. There is no where to be seen that orderly observance of the Sabbath, which, to a traveller in Great Britain, bespeaks the mild influence of religion. On the contrary, the lower classes of the people are a prey to that gross, irrational sort of superstition which has little tendency to enlighten the mind, to curb the passions, or to regulate the conduct. The empire of the priest is founded on the fears and the observances of his followers. It is a throne whose ‘stubble pillars’ are concealed by the gloomy darkness of ignorance and credulity. The ceremonies of



worship are mere mechanical operations, consisting of exterior practices, in which the mind has no concern, and which have therefore been often compared to the pagan idolatry of antiquity. It is founded on the passions, and its effects are most visible in creating and keeping alive a bitter spirit of intolerance. I know that the heart of man cannot in any country, generally speaking, bear a religious void; but here it seems supplied by a system of blind and implicit reliance on the directions of a godly father. He regulates their wants in this life, and directs their fears or hopes of the next. He sells them the absolution of their sins, or resigns them to the pit of damnation. They can entertain little dread of incurring stains which may be easily wiped away. It is faith, rather than works, which, to judge

from their characters and conduct, seems to be considered as achieving the glorious reward of salvation. On the assurance of a mortal man, and that often a venal one, they build their hopes of divine favour. On the worship of a few wooden images (false idols, before which they bow), the imaginary patronage of some tutelary saint, stated fastings, prayers, together with a few other absurd rites and ceremonies, they rest their hopes of a blessed immortality.

If this system of religion could make the people more sober, devout, and orderly, it would deserve the highest commendation. If it could remove that intemperate behaviour so universal, and harmonise the manners of three millions of people, the gratitude of the enlightened part of mankind would unite them in its

commendation. The philosopher must approve of every religion which makes a better man. Perhaps neither the Talmud, nor the Koran, deserve reprobation, when considered in a worldly point of view, as a code of laws, and apart from truths of a more sublime and celestial nature. But the effect of the Catholic superstition on the Irish, is to plunge their minds in the darkness and gothic ignorance of the 13th century. Had Great Britain still continued the prey of papal tyranny, it is probable that it would have been at present buried in that same gloomy ignorance. We should not have been able to boast of our Bacon, our Locke, or our Newton. The philosophy of the latter we undoubtedly should never have had produced, since it is well known that Galileo, who went upon the same princi-



ples with the system of Copernicus, was obliged to renounce them as a dangerous and damnable heresy, because they seemed inconsistent with the motion of the Sun as mentioned in the old Testament. But it is not merely as a barrier to knowledge that I disapprove of this religion in Ireland. What is perhaps of equal importance is, that it makes them the dupes of artful demagogues, who assume the cloak of the ecclesiastical profession. It is the character of every rude nation to be led by its priests. By this religion, are often inflamed those fierce passions which sometimes break out with the most fanatical fury in all the horrors of civil war.

5. There is but one feature more which I have to add to this degraded character, and which we shall invariably find to characterize the manners of a people in a



state of ignorance and poverty. I mean that extraordinary *indolence*, so much exclaimed against in the Irish nation. A leading cause of this vice is a characteristic to which I have before at some length adverted. This is that extraordinary national pride and that vanity of high descent which so much prevails amongst the people. Perhaps there is nothing which is so much calculated to paralyze the arm of virtuous industry as the pride of birth, notwithstanding it is often, as I have before allowed, a preventive of crime. But this political effect, this destructive idleness which seems almost inseparable from it, may undoubtedly be counteracted by moral causes. To agriculture and trade and civilization we can alone look for a removal of this defect. Industry is nothing but a habit, and these are capable of lead-

ing to the formation of it. They are the principles which expand and exercise the faculties of the mind, and ‘shake off that lethargy which creeps over the senses of barbarous nations.’ Whether we trace the character of the German, as delineated by the pencil of Tacitus, or actually behold the Irish boor; we shall find them both the same slothful beings. When the uneasiness which such a state of existence must naturally create, leads them to action, it must often be to acts of murder and rapine. Their dispositions accommodate themselves in an extraordinary manner to the opposite extremes of indolence and turbulent aggression\*. The moment they cease to be despicable, they become

\* *Mira diversitate naturæ cum iisdem homines sic ament inertiam et oderunt quietem.—TAC. de morib. Germ.*

objects of dread and danger. An eloquent writer who well knew and commiserated the condition of these unfortunate men, in describing their excesses, accounts at the same time for the cause of them, in these words: ‘The nation (says he) is at present divided into two almost distinct bodies, with little common interest, sympathy, or connexion. One of these possesses all the franchises, all the property, all the education: the other is composed of drawers of water and cutters of turf for them. Are we to be astonished, that when they are reduced to a mob, if they happen to act at all, they will act exactly like a mob, without temper, measure, or forefight\*?’

I have now finished that hasty sketch

\* Burke’s Works, v. iii. p. 548, 4to edit.



of the features which seem to me, since I have been in Ireland, to stamp the character of the lower classes of the people, and separate them from the rich part of the nation. I may draw this conclusion from the examination of them both : The polished minority of the nation is one hundred years behind England in refinement, and the rude majority of it is at least five. With many noble qualities of the heart, there is still much remaining for the slow operation of laws and civilization to effect. The virtues of courage and generosity are dimmed and obscured by a cloud of vices. With the rich, a relaxed system of morality is aided by the artificial varnish of fashionable manners and those advantages which I have allowed that the laws of honour may and do carry with them, notwithstanding their mixture of evil.



With the poor it is replaced by the grossest superstition. How much the rich have benefited by the exchange, I leave you to determine. As for the poor, I think they must be acknowledged dreadful losers by it. Perhaps there is some truth in the opinion of Lord Verulam, that '*atheism* is better than superstition; for a man is then left to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws and to reputation; all which may be guides to an outward moral virtue. But superstition dismounts all these, and erects an absolute monarchy in the mind of men\*.'

Civil discords have also injured the cause of religion, and increased the natural ferocity of the Irish character. Their tendency is to banish the milder qualities of

\* Essay xviii. of Superstition.

the heart, and to familiarize the mind to reflections at which it would naturally revolt with horrôr. A proportionate degradation of the morals and manners takes place, till at length the individual contemplates or engages in scenes of massacre and devastation without feeling any emotions of fear or remorse.

For my own part, I cannot conclude this long letter (which is short, considering how extensive the nature of the subject of it is), without again repeating, that I do not know of any country where the character of the people is more fitted by nature, than is that of the Irish, for the highest attainments in moral or intellectual excellence. The bountiful hand of the Almighty has given the materials; it must be the care of a legislator to form and fashion them. That there is a great

portion of talent given them, may be judged of from the numerous and bright line of examples which they have given to the world. There is a long list of poets, philosophers, and historians, whose very names compose a galaxy of shining stars in the firmament of literature. With what pleasure could I dwell on the learning of Archbishop Usher; the wit, eccentricity, and knowledge, of Swift; the penetration, judgment, and benevolent patriotism of Bishop Berkeley; the artless simplicity and *naïveté* of Sterne; the versatile talents of the good-natured Goldsmith; the splendid eloquence and excellent morals of Burke; not to mention a crowd of elegant poets, classic writers, and sprightly dramatists, some of which are now living, but many more gone to swell the list of departed Irish worthies.



It is true that within these few years the Irish have highly distinguished themselves in literature, but it has generally been under the fostering hand of British governments. At home they have seldom made any figure. Even the Royal Irish Academy has never yet brought to light any thing extraordinary for genius, taste, or learning. A leading cause of the very few works of merit which appear in Ireland remains to be mentioned. This is the want of an act of the legislature to protect the copy-right of authors. It is unnecessary to add that genius will always best flourish, and learning be most cultivated, where the rewards of it are least liable to uncertainty either in their nature or their continuance.

That this should never have been sufficiently attended to in Ireland, appears to



me extraordinary, when I consider the talents and knowledge which are often found there. There may be more good sense in England, but there is wanting the life and energy of the Irish character. 'Strong passions awaken the faculties, and suffer not a particle of the man to be lost.' That they possess those warm passions and sentiments which may be directed to the highest moral energies, I have already made appear. Virtue has been shewn to be nothing but passion disciplined by reason and good habits. Aristotle has even called it 'reflecting appetite,' and 'impassioned intellect\*.' From this association then proceeds all that is amiable, and all that is honourable, in society. From this co-operation the

\* Ethics to Nicomachus.

head acquires wisdom, and the heart temperance, fortitude, and justice. Whether you consider the happiness of individuals or of nations, it will be found in both to arise from the same sources. If you improve the man in knowledge and virtue, you thereby improve the state in them. By this a state arrives at that which is the standard of polish and urbanity; of that elegance without luxury, and that refinement without effeminacy which Pericles thought the peculiar glory of his age and country\*. There is a chain in society, which plainly accounts for it. ‘Men form the rudiments of families; families constitute the elements of states; and in every system the parts will be found by their respective excellencies to promote the perfection and harmony of the whole.’

I am, &c. &c.

\* Oratio Funeb. in Thucyd.

## LETTER II.

ON THE PRACTICAL MERITS OF THE  
GOVERNMENT, &c. &c.

*My dear Sir,*

THERE is no nation in the world where the effects of jarring and discordant interests are so visible, as in the one where I am at present an English traveller. They force themselves upon the attention of the most superficial observer. The animosities of the people are so great and irreconcilable, that a most important and instructing lesson of politics is to be gathered from the collision. You may conclude that I was eager to take advantage of it, and to glean every information on a subject which from its importance to hu-

man happiness deserves the deepest consideration.

I set myself therefore attentively to work, in order to discover what were the causes of these contending interests and unhappy dissensions, which for so long a time have distracted Ireland. I soon found that they might almost all be traced to the establishment of an English government over it, not merely because it was English in its birth, but because its growth as well as its adoption were merely for the benefit of those who were of English origin. As I have in my preceding letter endeavoured to give you some idea of this people in their individual capacities, as men, I shall devote the present one to the design of considering them in their political situation, as citizens. The discussion is indeed difficult and perplexing, since it



has divided the opinions of the greatest statesmen of the age we live in. I shall however endeavour to narrow it as much as possible. It will be my aim to tread over such ground as I cannot slip or stumble on, to choose such a path as I cannot easily wander from; and where I *do* deviate out of the beaten road, it will be, like a faithful traveller, only to notice such facts and objects as I think worth describing.

But perhaps it will be observed to me in this political outset: ‘Unless your mind is unprejudiced by erroneous theories, you will see things through a false medium and with distempered optics.’ It is therefore necessary that you should first examine into the strength of the basis upon which you build, lest the superstructure should be weak, from the tottering foundation upon which it rests.’

My answer is ready: I acknowledge the truth of the intimation, and think myself in justice bound to declare the principles upon which I set out. Why should I not glory in an opportunity of disavowing the most pestilential political tenets that ever over-ran the world. I feel an equal pride in breaking a lance either against the absurd system which upholds despotism, or that which justifies popular phrensy. The reign of the House of Stuart ought to furnish to every Englishman a commentary on the one, and the excesses of the French Revolution on the other. But that religious system which deduced passive obedience from the attempt to trace government up to the Deity, has now long slept amongst the dusty volumes of our libraries, and a philosophical one has started up in its place which rests the foundation of political

authority upon Contract. The former will probably be never again awakened into life, although the darling child of modern times is not likely to be long-lived. Both Hobbes and Rousseau, the guardians and champions of it, have drawn altogether opposite consequences, though equally dangerous ones, from the same principle. Nothing can so much expose the weakness of political principles as a contrariety in the inferences which are made from them. From those in question have been deduced on the one hand a system of despotism, and on the other a government of disorder and uncontrouled licentiousness. The social contract however of Rousseau does not merit the appellation of a political system, because a system *ex vi termini* implies order and consistency\*.

\* Si on se donnait la peine de lire attentivement



When to the thus admirably illustrative glosses of these two political navigators, from whose discoveries a new world has indeed been made known to us, (but has been a world of misery); is added the light which reason and experience have thrown upon the subject; I think it will be found that in these Northern islands the accompanying antidote will be powerful enough for the poison. Between the powers of action and reaction I trust that our minds will be kept sound and healthy. The consequences of erroneous systems of politics, like the excesses of the human body, generally afford their own remedy. The unbiaſſed inquirer after truth is brought back to some standard from whence he has been insensibly led

ce livre du Contrât Social, il n'y a pas un page ou l'on ne trouvat des erreurs ou des contradictions.  
—*Voltaire Idée Republicaine.* Note to 2nd edit.



astray; or introduced to that true standard which is sanctioned and confirmed by the experience of ages.

I have thought it necessary to enter into this explanation, lest I should be thought to disapprove of the Irish government on account of its having been originally forced on the great majority of the nation, and still continuing inimical to what they consider their lawful interests. If the consent of the majority was indeed essential to the establishment of every lawful government, that of Ireland is undoubtedly a tyranny. But as I am persuaded that no such necessity exists, and that if it did, there is no government in the world which could stand the test of it; I do not condemn the Irish on any such grounds. There is no better guard against so grand a mistake in politics and others of a similar

nature, together with the dangerous consequences which may be deduced from them, than a right apprehension of first principles. To avoid the errors of modern innovators, mankind have been driven back to the writings of Aristotle. That extraordinary philosopher, whose fame is now as fresh as it was two thousand years ago, must be again called in, to instruct the moderns in a science, in which, after so long an interval of time, they have yet made no improvements, but have rather deviated into the grossest mistakes and errors. From the writings of that great genius we are then taught to consider the origin of government, not as the work of art or of intellect, much less as the result of contract; but as the consequence of a natural instinctive impulse towards comfort, convenience, and security. Govern-

ment was not made, created, or covenanted about, but arose out of human nature. It is coeval with society, and society is coeval with man. The histories of the origin of almost every nation, as far as they can be traced back, confirm this hypothesis. From the almost insensibly gradual coalition of a few hunters or fishers, the government of every nation has taken its rise. Laws indeed, which were afterwards added, are artificial aids and contrivances first introduced to prop and support this natural institution or new-made government. History even goes so far as to inform us that the first government of every nation was of a monarchical nature, and without laws, *because* the will of the prince was in the place of all law\*.

\* Nullæ civitati leges erant, quia libido regum pro legibus habebatur. JUST. Hist. l. 2.



With laws commenced liberty and security, for they thwart, controul and subject, the passions of individuals, in order to prevent their injuring society. But the origin of political society is totally distinct. As it was dictated by nature, and cherished by a conviction and sense of its utility, so that same principle of general convenience which, for the well-being of mankind, necessarily gave rise to government, still holds it together, and must ever continue to do so. Utility is thus the moral principle upon which the obedience of citizens and the protection of magistrates rest. It was nature which established the subordinations of servant to master, of family to father, and of wife to husband. These three branches of domestic economy are the germe of all government: *Principium Urbis et quasi Seminarium Reipublicæ*\*.

\* See Cicero's Offices, b. I. c. 17.



But in every state there are certain interests which are contending with each other for a preponderance, and from the elevation of one of which, or the combination of two or of the whole, the government receives its peculiar character and denomination. These three principles are talents, wealth, and numbers; birth being nothing more than the inheritance of a title to the rewards bestowed upon either of the two first. The best government must obviously be that in which these three principles have their just preponderance, distinctions, and honours. But to proceed: Experience has proved that this equilibrium can alone be preserved by the establishment of different bodies, to each of which must be assigned the guardianship of one of the above three principles, and a superintending distrust and jealousy of the other two. This

is in other words nothing less than that government of check and controul which is 'emphatically called *free*, because no one principle is exalted on the depression of the others.' It has therefore been well said, that in governments, simplicity is despotism, and combination the only source of liberty\*. The reason of this is, that in the simple forms of government, (which is the first case), power, and the controul of that power, are vested in the same hand; whereas in the mixed governments (which is the latter case), they are placed in different hands. And though the preservation of the three principles, or of that just weight which talents, property, and numbers, should have, is entrusted to bodies termed monarchical, aristocratical,

\* Macauley's Rudiments of Politics.

and democratic ; still the government does not discontinue to be the less founded in nature and utility. Its origin also still continues the same, though its genealogy is a little more extended, and its moral principle, upon which depends the obedience of the subject and the authority of the government, like the old leaden ruler of the Lesbian architecture, equally accommodates itself to every form.

Thus it is that in the Politics of Aristotle, in whose writings the above principles are all bottomed, we see the embryo of the British Constitution. It is a vulgar error to suppose that philosopher was unacquainted with the advantages of a balanced government, of a government of check and controul, or even of a representative one\*. There is not the least foun-

\* See the Preface to Dr. Gillies's Aristotle.



dation to suppose, that they had escaped the notice of so deep an observer \*.

Thus you see, my dear Sir, I proceed to inquire into the state of Irish Politics, with a mind holding in equal indifference the principles and the conclusions flowing from that divine right which kings have set up, and that doctrine of contract which the populace oppose to it. I have proved my right, an unprejudiced mind with an independent spirit, the passport to any inquiry. You will see that I have not

\* I cannot refrain from embracing this opportunity of acknowledging my obligations to Mr. Mackintosh, for the light which he has thrown on Aristotle's Politics. The latest, the most elegant, and perhaps the best commentary, or rather almost *paraphrase*, ever made of these political writings was delivered by Mr. Mackintosh in the course of his Lectures on the Law of Nature and Nations, in Lincoln's-Inn Hall, last winter. I am happy in paying this tribute of applause to an undertaking, at the execution of which throughout I had the satisfaction of being present.



adopted private, but general advantage, as the standard by which I have regulated my observations, and have measured the inferences which I have drawn from them.

The prevalent form of government which is found to exist in any nation is, indeed, a subject, to understand the nature of which thoroughly often requires some trouble, and is attended with great difficulty. But the criterion of the practical excellence of every government is level to the observation and capacity of all men. The state of the people is the mirror in which its merits or demerits may be always read. This is a standard which no accidental circumstances can vary.

Whatever then may be the preponderance which a government gives to talents,

to property, or to numbers, different modifications of which three antagonist principles make the differences in all the constitutions of Europe; there nevertheless must remain two immutable and eternal rules, by which its practical merits are to be decided. The first of these flows from the nature of man, and is this: 'Under a good government the middle rank of people always *most* abounds.' The second rule springs from the most approved principles of politics, and the very essence of a balanced government. It is this: 'Under a government well administered, it is always difficult to ascertain to which of the three simple forms of government the constitution *most* approximates\*.'

It is impossible to entertain a doubt that

\* See Aristotle's Politics, book the sixth.

the moderately rich most abounding in a nation, is a sure test of a good practical government; if we consider that wealth produces insolence, and poverty the mean and ferocious vices. But moderate fortune is ever found to create that happy medium of character which is the true standard of human happiness. The two opposite extremes place mankind in a state of intellectual and moral degradation inconsistent with good government. The presumptuous arrogance and dropt greatnefs of immoderate wealth is, however, worse than the meanness of pedlars or ferocity of savages. The middle rank of people have also not only been ever found the best guardians of public liberty, but it has always been even found to exist in proportion to their prevalence. I trust that my other principle, concerning balanced power, car-

ries with it its own demonstration. It may be called a leading *axiom* under a government of check and controul. Liberty can only be preserved by the unfettered operation of every wheel and member of this political mechanism. All the governments both of antiquity and of modern times will be found more or less free as they approach to this model of perfection\*. But after all our researches, there will never be found any example so powerfully supporting both these criterion principles as the British Constitution, which stands proudly foremost and eminently conspicuous above all others to silence the sophist and convince the real philosopher.

Such then are the two principles, drawn

\* Polybius has taken great pains to prove that it existed in perfection in the Roman Constitution. Fragm. l. 6.



from the theory which I have first explained, by which I have examined and judged of the Irish government. No disciple of Zoroaster could more firmly have relied on the truth of *his two principles*, than I have done. No devout Persian, no sanctified minister of the Magi, could more pertinaciously have resolved to adhere to them. They have been the *Zendavesta*\* of my political creed. You will find that I have used them as a clue by which I have been guided through the mazes and intricacies which are found in the labyrinth of this political discussion.

The Irish government is, in theory, the rival of the British constitution: it is formed and fashioned upon the model of

\* The religious doctrine, of the Two Principles established amongst the ancient Persians by Zoroaster, was contained in a book called the *Zendavesta*.

it; but in administration it differs *toto cælo*. Instead of being that balanced government of King, Lords, and Commons; that constitution founded on a just and equal regard to talents, wealth, and numbers, embodied in monarchical, aristocratical, and democratical corporations, the respective interests of which are equitably adjusted, and reciprocally check and controul each other, it is in practice the corruption and very antipodes of them all. The truth is, that neither the King nor the Commons have any *real* share of the public authority. They form necessary, and I grant even nominal, members of the legislature; but in fact the aristocracy has a preponderance which outrages the arithmetic of true politics.

Neither is this aristocracy that natural one which is founded on the distinctions

of talents, birth, or fortune, and which, more or less, must and ought to prevail in every country. Virtue, whether personal or hereditary, must always make distinctions amongst men, and give a pre-eminence to those who are possessed of them. This is a natural aristocracy, but it is not the one which prevails in Ireland. Neither is the latter an usurped despotism of one house of parliament over the other two members of the government. No: it is nothing more or less than a tyrannizing junto, formed out of both houses, that constitutes this odious aristocracy, who have entailed the kingdom on themselves. This is it which clogs and fetters the wheels of government. The principle upon which it is founded is English descent. The government is therefore a complete oligarchy. Instead of

there being any doubt as to which of the simple forms of government the constitution inclines, there is the most barefaced exhibition of the little weight which either talents or numbers possess when put into the scales against this birth and the property which has been long attached to it. Neither does the monarchical branch of the constitution possess its just weight and equipoise. It is altogether supported by the presence of an English viceroy, and an English minister. Against these two, but more particularly against the latter, is the whole force and energy of the aristocracy directed. He is looked upon by them as an interloper, whose views and interests are diametrically opposite to, and inconsistent with, their views and interests, and who is serving not them and their country, but Great



Britain and an absent sovereign. The consequence of this opposition necessarily is, that the system of corruption is resorted to, in order to make amends for that want of weight and equipoise which the executive government ought to possess without resorting to such assistance.

There is a long chain of consequences connected with this circumstance. The most important of these is, that the connexion between the two kingdoms being maintained by this single tie of unity of executive power, is necessarily endangered. With that weak support which it receives in Ireland, if reason did not therefore point out the probability of a complete separation, experience immediately must. It is fresh in the recollection of every one, that during the late alarming indisposition of his Majesty, the par-

liament of this country asserted their right to appoint a regent of their own choosing, who should be independent of, and distinct from, that of Great Britain. If this had really taken place, the separation of the two kingdoms was the inevitable consequence. That it *would* have happened nothing could have possibly prevented, but the happy recovery of his Majesty, and the consequent resumption of his royal functions.

I trust that it is evident to you, from what is above said, that the monarchical part of the Irish government is too weak and insignificant to maintain the equipoise of its theoretic constitution. Let us, then, next examine the popular part of it. Here it will appear, that there is not any just representation of the people. Three-fourths of the population, which

is the proportion of the Catholics of this country to the Protestants, are unrepresented in parliament, if the being barred from electing members, the objects of their own free, unbiassed choice, deserve (as it undoubtedly must) to be so called. They are prevented choosing such representatives as must necessarily most possess their confidence, namely, members of their own religious community. They are, on the contrary, compelled to elect protestants, whose interests are as opposite and inimical (as are their religious opinions) to those of the individuals for whom they are delegated the representatives in parliament. This therefore cannot, in fact, be any real representation. The inference which we are compelled to draw, therefore, is, that if the royal branch of the constitution is destitute of

its just equipoise, the popular part of it is a mere mockery and mimicry of a democracy. Both are merged and almost extinguished in an aristocracy which was meant to balance and maintain them. Alone, and almost undisturbed, this aristocracy rules the constitution, the Queen and sovereign lady of the Irish nation.

You will perceive that I have inverted the order into which I arranged the two grand principles by which I judge of the Irish government, and have taken the liberty of discussing the last of them first. The reason why I have done so was, because the fact which I have measured by it, is of public notoriety. It is not necessary to have travelled into Ireland to acquire the knowledge of it. The existence of an odious aristocracy in it, is known to



every man on your side of the water. But to apply the other principle, to observe whether the middle rank does or not abound, a voyage across the Irish sea is altogether indispensable. In my preceding letter I have endeavoured to acquaint you with the characters of only two orders of men in this country, the rich and the poor; because there is not any intermediate class. I shall proceed now to make some further observations on the same subject.

Here I will be bold enough to assert, that the peculiarity which most strikes every stranger upon landing in Ireland, and of which I myself felt the full force, is that face of beggary, want, and wretchedness, which every where presents itself. For my own part, I was so much struck with the contrast between it and the

country which I had just quitted, that I could not but reflect, how very applicable would be the remark which Charles V. made of the relative appearance of France and Spain (through both of which countries he had often travelled) to the comparison between England and Ireland. ‘In the former,’ said he, ‘every thing abounds; in the latter every thing seems to be wanting.’ Had he been crossing the Irish channel, no observation could possibly have been more applicable.

The traveller who lands in Dublin finds that the streets are crowded with craving wretches, whose distresses are shocking to humanity, and whose nakedness is hurtful to the eye of decency. With this misery of the lower classes (for in a greater or a less degree it pervades three-fourths of the whole people of Ireland) is contrasted

the condition of the wealthy. Their public edifices, their palaces, their squares, and the streets which diverge from them, and their equipages, are magnificent beyond measure. In the capital of the kingdom there is to be seen nothing of those groups of moderately dimensioned houses, inhabited by the middling classes of people, and suitable to a mediocrity of fortune, which compose the far greater part of the city of London. The dimensions of all the buildings in Ireland are in opposite extremes. The eye reverts, almost the same as in Egypt, from the pyramid to the mud-cottage. The air seems to be either 'mocked with idle state,' or the earth defiled with more than Caffrarian wretchedness.

I visited the Houses of Parliament, and the Courts of Justice, which constitute

two of the grandest piles of building in all Dublin. But neither law nor a constitution can exist in edifices: if they could, Ireland would indeed enjoy them. But what are these boasted terms of freedom and justice, but words and parchment, unless a people have rights and property to be protected? If they are only made the fortresses to uphold oppression, they become a curse instead of a blessing. If they are made the guards of property wrung by the tyranny of a few from the great mass of the people, they are nothing but a monument whose basis is the misery and oppression of the nation.

I looked on the Parliament-house in Dublin with its proud Corinthian pillars, its boast of ancient architecture, its magnificent porticos, extent of building, glittering cupola, and crowded statues, which



crown the whole, with delight and admiration. But its semicircular front of Portland stone, only serves to screen so many hundred yards of houses which would otherwise disgust the eye. I next walked to the Four Courts (of Justice), and surveyed that building from the opposite bank of the Liffey, to that on which the noble edifice bearing that name is situated. I was astonished at the elegance of its exterior, exhibiting all the embellishments which architectural and sculptural science can bestow. In order to take a view of the interior of the building, I then crossed the narrow stream of the Liffey, over a bridge which seems to be intended as the prototype of ours at Westminster. As if making my approach to an Athenian temple, I ascended a lofty range of stone steps; I was soon ushered by an Irish

Cicerone into a splendid circular hall, nearly seventy feet in diameter, from which the four courts of justice radiate at equal distances. My eye dwelt with pride and admiration on fluted shafts and Corinthian capitals. I enumerated the emblematical devices which adorn this hall ; the signing the great charter of our common liberties by King John at Runnimead, and of those of the city of Dublin by King James, with crowds of feudal knights and barons bold, armed at all points. I looked higher towards the roof of the building, and numbered eight statues as if supporting the dome. There was Liberty and Eloquence, Prudence and Justice, Wisdom and Law, with Punishment, and lastly Mercy, bringing up the rear. Roving thus from ornament to ornament, from the intersecting black and white marble squares of the floor, which seemed formed like a planetarium

to revolve round a common centre, up to the cupola where the emulous plaisterer had exerted all his skill; I began to fancy myself in one of those fairy palaces which some ingenious romance-writers have described. But, by some accident in coming out, the talisman was broken, and the enchantment melted in a moment. The visionary fabric vanished into air. I found myself as much surprised as many other simple knights-errant have been when they awakened from a similar trance. My olfactory nerve was assailed by the horrid stench which arises from the Liffey (the *Cloaca Maxima* of Dublin); my auditory nerves were assaulted with the clamorous importunities of a crowd of beggars; and my organs of vision turned away with disgust from every edifice and object within the horizon.

I was impatient to get into the country,

For the accommodation which the Dublin hotels (they disdain the name of inns, and have no such thing) offer to strangers is most execrable and intolerable. An Englishman, who has never travelled out of his own country, can form no adequate idea of their dirt and inconveniences. I had been much better accommodated in the most dreary and unfrequented recesses of North Wales. I could not possibly throw myself on the hospitality of my Irish friends, because at this season of the year they are in the country. I therefore followed their example as soon as I had seen every thing which Dublin could offer to the curiosity of a *foreigner*.

Though the accommodations for travelling are here very inferior to those of Great Britain, yet the roads are good, and the inns in the country are infinitely su-



perior to those of the capital. But the contrast between the rich and the poor, the lord and the peasant, is as strongly marked as it is in Dublin. But I have endeavoured, in my last letter, to give you some idea of this class of people. I can only add to my description of this full picture of human misery, that I have read of the bondsmen and villeins of the ancient feudal system, and of the boors and vassals (*glebæ adscriptitii*), as they are now seen to exist in the tenures of modern Germany: but I cannot conceive the situation of either to be so miserable as that of the Irish peasantry. I am convinced that the condition of the West India negro is a paradise to it. The slave in our colonies has meat to eat, and distilled spirit to drink, whilst the life of the Irish peasant is almost that of a savage who feeds upon

milk and roots. His clothing, if indeed it deserves that name, is a system of ‘loop’d and window’d raggedness,’ and he lives in a clay-built cottage, such as I have described it to you. I assure you that I have felt for the dignity of human nature, when I have beheld a race of men, who, in form and motion, in stature and in countenance, were the pride of the species; on whose persons Heaven had lavished all its favours—

*Os sublime dedit, cœlumque tueri  
Jussit, et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus:*

who are gifted with courage, with generosity, with many heroic virtues, and almost with every thing, in outward appearance, which can give the world ‘assurance of men:’ to see them, I say, humiliated and degraded to so wretched a condition. I am not the advocate of rebellion; but

this I must say, that if such men as these are to be made Helots and Penests of, and chained to the cultivation of the soil without partaking of hardly any of its fruits; if a government fit only for the puny race of Asiatic climes is forced upon the hardy giant sons of the North; their lords and rulers must expect that the avenging thunder will sometimes burst on their heads.

Such are the facts which in this country offer themselves to view; and such is the character of the Irish government in its practical merits, which the application of these two principles therefore obliges us to make. There is neither balanced power, nor a middle class of people. The country is divided between the disproportionately rich, and the miserably poor. It is ruled by an aristocracy with a rod of iron. As

under the despotisms of the East, there is scarce any intermediate station between the sultan and the slave, the free governments of Europe are perhaps distinguished from the despotic ones of the East, by nothing more than the opposite conditions of the great mass of the people. The comprehensive policy of the one produces the peace and happiness of the whole: but in Asiatic monarchies we see, what I think Montesquieu somewhere calls, a splendid focus collected in the centre, with misery and weakness in all the extremities. Such is the case in Ireland. There is no powerful nobility, no judicial corporation, no mercantile interests to temper and moderate the power of the aristocracy over the people, because these very bodies are themselves the component parts of the aristocracy.



Neither is the system of Vicerojal government, as it exists in Ireland, altogether without objections to it. Its exertions must necessarily be crippled by the aristocracy of the country. Whether it is successful or unsuccessful in its administration, still it is at all times attended with the greatest inconveniences. When it is opposed, the wheels of government are clogged, and the executive power palsied and inefficient: When it is unimpeded, it is through the medium of influence and corruption, which are more detestable, although less sensibly destructive. But this evil, though more slow, is yet equally sure in its operation.

This is the miserable government which subsists in Ireland. How long it will exist, God alone knows; but, if I may venture to predict, it will not be long. The

aristocracies of the world seem to have ‘lived their day.’ They have perished in most other countries, and cannot long survive in Ireland. This at least I will venture to assert, that not even the plebeians of old Rome ever fought so much for the removal of that patrician power by which they were oppressed, as the Irish do for that of the petty tyrants who rule over them.

Upon the crisis of this great contest the welfare of Ireland altogether depends. The parties are now at issue on it. Until the matter is decided, the country will remain in its present confusion. ‘For while a system of administration is attempted, entirely repugnant to the genius of the people, and not conformable even to [the real principle of their government, every thing must ne-

ceffarily be difordered for a time, until this fyftem deftroys the true conftitution, or the conftitution gets the better of this fyftem.'

I am, &c. &c.

## LETTER III.

OF THE RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES OF  
THE IRISH, &c. &c.

*My dear Sir,*

IT is a peculiarity known only to Ireland, perhaps of all other countries, that its inhabitants are more distinguished from each other, on account of their religious opinions, than they are by any other criterion. To this as a leading *cause* may be traced that extreme state of oppression in which I have described the poor as living. It is their misfortune to be born Roman Catholics, and to adhere to that religion which their ancestors have professed ever since the gospel was first preached in the island. That pure and humble religion which was sent from Heaven to unite all



the nations of the earth in piety, harmony, and universal love, has proved to this country a source of the most bloody and implacable animosities.

If I were about to give a perfect stranger to the political connexions of Great Britain some general idea of the condition of the people of Ireland in the article of religion, I should desire him to abstract himself for a moment, and endeavour to conceive what must be the relation between the conquerors and the natives of some fresh invaded country. If his fancy could paint him a lively picture of the forenness, the jealousy, and the distrust, which must exist, he would then be able to comprehend, in some little degree at least, the situation of the Irish. No animosity can be more irreconcilable, no jealousy more watchful, and, I will venture to add, no

dread so irremovable, as that which seems to subsist between the government and the subjects of this kingdom.

If you pause for a moment to consider the outline of the history of the connexion between Great Britain and Ireland, you will be able to account for it. You will see the causes of this despotism in government and intolerance in religion. It is scarcely any thing but a beadroll of broils and battles. Henry the Second invaded Ireland about six hundred years ago, but very imperfectly conquered it, and planted some colonies in it. It was at that time plunged in such extreme barbarity, that we are informed by the historians of the age, that only a few English of desperate fortunes could be persuaded to transport themselves into the country\*. That few

\* See Brompton, p. 1069, and Neubrig, 403, quoted in Hume's History, v. i. p. 431, 8vo. edit.

however had great difficulty to maintain their station; attempts being perpetually made to expel the colony. It was not till the reign of James the First, that the island was completely subdued. That monarch endeavoured to civilize the natives by abolishing their barbarous usages and customs, and substituting in their room the benefits of English government, laws, and manners. But in this he met with great opposition, the Irish being strongly attached to a sort of wild unwritten system of jurisprudence, called their Brehon law, the leading feature of which was that of inflicting a pecuniary commutation on all offences, including even murder.

Unfortunately the exertions of James were opposed not merely by the brutality and ignorance of the Irish, but with an

obstacle of the most unfurmountable nature, which had but lately arisen. This was that bar which the reformation had placed between the natives, and the colonists who followed the religion of the mother country. The consequence was, that the opposition which laws, interest, and manners, had long before created, was inflamed by religious antipathy, the most deadly of all passions. To the old distinction between colonist and native was superadded that of Protestant and Catholic. Into these two distinct bodies of Protestant colonists and Catholic natives, the nation has ever since continued to be divided. This added fresh fuel to the flame of their former dissensions, and may be considered as the cause of all the calamities which have since afflicted this unfortunate country. Religion, instead of tending to heal



the discontents which the government occasioned, heightened and increased them. Instead of their co-operating in a tendency to make good citizens, they have created irreconcilable enemies. I shall endeavour to give you some account of the state of the Catholics and of the Protestants, in a regular order.

I. The *Catholics*, I have already observed, are the real natives of Ireland, and the original rightful possessors of the soil. But they have however been gradually expelled from that possession by the sure progress of violence and confiscation. No sooner was war ended or rebellion crushed than the lawyers went to work with chicane, and the legislature with penal statutes. They first stripped the native of his estate, and then disqualified him by law from recovering it again, or even from acquir-

ing other property. When aggression provoked the Irish to self-defence or to revenge, the frantic struggles which were dictated by their despair, were converted into pretext, and new reasons for additional acts of oppression.

It is not therefore to be wondered that the Irish should always have looked upon these colonists as intruders and robbers, and have embraced every opportunity of expelling them from their country. With this view have been the associates of every domestic and foreign enemy to the government of England. They have joined, if not openly and avowedly, yet always in their hearts and minds, every pretender to the crown from Lambert Simnel down to Edward Stuart. We have never been at war with the French, the Spaniards, or the Emperor, but those powers have found

their account in stirring up the native Irish. Numbers of them have always been opposed to us in the armies of our enemies, and, by their desperate valour alone, have often stood in the way of our victories. *Annales vaterum delicta loquentur: hærebunt maculæ.* The consequences of such strong disaffection towards the English have been such as might naturally have been expected. Attainder has been followed up by attainder, and confiscation by confiscation. In the reign of James the whole province of Ulster came to the crown; and equally immense tracts of land were taken from the Catholics in the times of Cromwell and William the Third. By these means, the interest of three millions of natives in their own soil has been at length almost totally extirpated. Penal laws and disqualifying statutes, some of

which still remain, completely foreclosed the possibility of their ever regaining that interest. They were deprived of the right of electing representatives, and still continue shut out from seats in Parliament and all the great offices of state. Every office and every franchise, ecclesiastical, civil, and military, was taken from them; and the merciless unrelenting hand of the law, having stripped them naked, turned them out of doors, that miserable populace which we now behold them. For my own part, since I have been in Ireland, I have invariably ascertained that almost every pitiable object in rags and misery was a Catholic; and that almost every man who enjoyed the advantages of food and cloathing obtained them by his Protestantism. They carry these palpable badges of their religious differences about



them. It is utterly impossible that the contrast can be more striking, between the lazy luxurious European and the naked starved Asiatic on the plains of Hindostan.

II. I take my leave of the Catholics for the present, and turn to the *Irish Protestants*. These are the colonists who have migrated from the mother country, and who have been fed by the plunder gained by conquest and confiscation. The Protestant religion has also been long the badge of that aristocracy which in my last letter I have mentioned as tyrannizing over Ireland.

But the Protestant colonists in this country are divided into two classes; those of the Church of England, and those of the Church of Scotland. The descendants of the English are of the first order;

and these are the wealthy inhabitants of Dublin, Waterford, Cork, and the whole southern and eastern coasts. They are like the rich embroidered border of a tattered and thread-bare mantle. The second class is composed of emigrants from Scotland, their heirs and successors. These are spread over all the northern provinces of the kingdom, enjoying a tolerable share of the commerce of the country and some of its landed property. Of each of these in their order.

1. Conquest and confiscation constitute the title of the Protestant who issued from England. Military service was in general the consideration he paid, and his sword might have been properly called his title-deed. The followers of Cromwell, and the heroes who afterwards gained the battle of the Boyne, which confirmed the

settlement of the English, were rewarded with the estates of those who fell by the sword or the hands of the executioner.

The spoils of the slain were left to those who fought for something more than glory. The estates and effects of those who fell in battle, and of those who were at all implicated in the charge of disaffection, which probably always composed a still greater number, were the booty of the conquering soldiers. They were accordingly distributed amongst them. These hands still engross all the church patronage, all the honours, and the far greater part of the landed property of the country.

2. As the pride of Alexander could bear no equal with him in power, so did the jealousy of the Anglo-Irish for a long time influence them in their conduct towards the Scotch. The far greater part of



this numerous body, computed at near 1,000,000, settled in Ireland in the reign of their countryman James the First. But these adventurers, and fellow-labourers in the same profitable vineyard with the English, were not admitted to an equal footing with them. The supreme power of the state has been always almost exclusively in the hands of the Protestants. The Dissenters were for a long time excluded, not only from all share in the legislature, but even from all subordinate offices of magistracy. The test and corporation acts, which deprived them of all secondary offices of magistracy under the government, have however been at length repealed; at least so far as concerns the civil power of the state.

The Dissenters are an opulent and enlightened body of men, possessing large



landed estates, and having exclusively in their own hands great part of the commerce of the country. The linen trade, which has been properly called the great staple of Irish wealth, is a child of their own rearing. They established it themselves; brought it to perfection by their own industry; and of course have the emoluments of it exclusively in their own hands. There remains therefore no source of discontent and uneasiness which they can reasonably complain of, except indeed their exclusion from church patronage and ecclesiastical wealth and honours, may be thought of that nature.

These are the prominent religious distinctions which prevail in Ireland.

They exist also in England, but they are not so marked, nor are the consequences of them so oppressive. They affect but a

small part of the population of the country; whilst in Ireland they tyrannize almost over the whole inhabitants. The stigma of religion. (for it cannot be called any thing else) is attached to more than three millions of Catholics, and to nearly one million of Dissenters, though it affects the latter in a much less important degree. Not more than five hundred thousand Protestants can therefore be said to enjoy, fully and without any restriction whatever, the benefits of government\*.

\* Mr. Jackson, in a paper intended to have been sent to France, but which was seized, and fully proved on his trial, estimates the population of Ireland at 4,500,000; of which 450,000 are Protestants, 900,000 Dissenters, and 3,150,000 Catholics.—Mr. Chalmers estimated the number of inhabitants in 1791 to amount to 4,200,000.—I find however, that a very late writer (Dr. Duignan) disapproves even of this calculation, and says that it cannot be much more than three millions, two thirds of which he reckons to be Roman Catholics and one third Pro-

I must here confess that I should be ashamed not to add myself to the list of the advocates for that universal toleration which is every day gaining partisans, and which looks to the removal of all religious distinctions in political matters. I am persuaded, and cannot be induced to relinquish the conviction, that knowledge is becoming every day more generally and more equally diffused over Europe; shall I say over the Globe? We are daily gaining fresh lights from the philosophy of ethics, and even of religion, almost in the same manner as astronomers by the improvement of their glasses, are continually enlarging their catalogues of the visible fixed stars. Not that these lights, both in physics and in morals, did not before exist, but that they

testants.—(Present Political State of Ireland, p. 28, and Appendix, No. 1), *Note to 2d edit.*



were invisible to us. In the latter case, it was nothing but ignorance which blinded mankind. The chapter of prejudices which impedes, and which always will impede, the improvement of the volume of Human Knowledge, is indeed a long and difficult one; but it is equally pleasing as it is true, to observe how greatly it has of late been abridged and curtailed. Let any man who doubts whether toleration (which is the natural effect of an enlightened age, and may even be called the barometer of it) is daily gaining ground, look (not at the modern French philosophy, which strikes at the very root of the first principles of morality), but let him look back one single century, and then consider how many millions of people have in the course of that time been emancipated from its shackles! When he



has looked over the map of Europe, and contemplated the condition of the different nations of it at the commencement of the eighteenth century, and at the close of it, comparing the former with the latter, notwithstanding all its drawbacks: let him then continue his retrograde review for another century. He will then be advanced almost into twilight. Let this inquirer then mount up one further period of a hundred years, and he will have nearly reached that 'Cimmerian darkness' which preceded the Reformation, and overspread the whole face of Europe. This was the boundary of that dark period of history, in which Europe was uniformly buried in the grossest superstition, and unhesitatingly bowed down before the golden calf, which was set up. Not even the breaks of light, the literary coruscations which burst forth in Italy

during the age of the Medicis, were sufficient to dispel that night of superstition which then prevailed.

If the philosophic inquirer recoils at the recollection of these times, and hurries back to the comparatively happy period in which he lives, he must then thank his stars that he was born in an age in which the principles of true religion are better understood. He will then see that toleration, the companion of knowledge and liberality, is making hasty strides amongst us. This is alone that solid happiness which is increasing in every age; it is that only Eternal Peace of this life which Voltaire thought mankind will ever enjoy undisturbed by war or commotion; it is the object for which Locke and Hume, and a list of worthies, long sighed in vain, and committed to their posterity the sacred charge of obtaining in still

happier times. When the idol of bigotry once falls to the ground (for it has some time tottered), and universal toleration rises out of its ashes, we shall then enjoy a 'blest sabbath of repose,—an age of joy and happiness,—a real Millenium!'

Much as I value my religion, yet truth obliges me to confess that the world has never yet enjoyed the full benefits of Christianity. The peace and harmony which it was intended to promote have never yet been sufficiently comprehensive. There has always been hitherto great ground for complaint, and great room for improvement. The proscriptions of antiquity are nothing when compared with those of modern religion. It is true that Christianity has removed those wide-spread scenes of desolation which marked the progress of such conquerors as Attila, Zingis, and Tamerlane;



but it has left in the room of them discords between the citizens of the same state, and religious factions whose domestic conflicts, if not so bloody, are yet more implacable. Mankind have never yet fully learnt the important lesson of bearing with other religious opinions than those of their own party.

I trust however that the period is not far off, when it will at least be well understood both in Great Britain, and Ireland; when all ecclesiastical tests will be banished beyond the pale of true religion, and the Dissenters be received into the bosom of the state as virtuous citizens, and the Roman Catholics as loyal subjects. There is no other test except that of religion which either of them could declare themselves aggrieved by. There can be no political ordeal, as the test of loyalty, to which they seem



unwilling to submit. I trust, and am convinced, that it is nothing but scruples of mere conscience to which they attend, in objecting to existing tests. Every security for their loyalty and attachment to the government, which the safety of the state shall require or think necessary, they have freely offered to give.

The principal grievance which the Roman Catholics both of Great Britain and of Ireland complain, is their exclusion from seats in the legislatures of either country. By the statutes made in the thirtieth year of Charles the Second's reign, and in the third of William and Mary's, it is required that all peers and members of parliament shall take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy before they can sit or vote in either house. The oath of allegiance to his Majesty, the Catholics are willing to subscribe to.

But it is to part of the oath of supremacy that they refuse their assent. This oath first requires them to abjure the ‘damnable doctrine, that princes excommunicated by the Pope, may be deposed and murdered by their own subjects.’ The Catholics have no objection to subscribe to this; but to the second part of the oath which requires them to declare that ‘no foreign person, prelate, or state, hath any power, jurisdiction, pre-eminence, or authority, *ecclesiastical or spiritual*, within this realm’, they object, because it interferes with the first principle of their religion, which is the acknowledgment of the Pope as the head of the Catholic church. It is thus merely a scruple of conscience which excludes them from their seats in the legislature. And even this scruple might be easily avoided, by the parliament altering two words

in the oath of supremacy, and substituting *civil or temporal* in the place of ‘*ecclesiastical or spiritual*.’ I confess I am of opinion that it might be done without destroying or even endangering any security erected for the preservation of the government. I am persuaded that the legislatures of both kingdoms are called upon to do it by every principle of justice, of liberality, and of those other virtues which support a free constitution.

With respect to the Dissenters of Ireland, they do not labour under the same disqualifications as that sect does in England. It is unnecessary for me to inform you, that the Dissenters of England are excluded from offices and employments by the test and corporation acts. These acts require as qualifications for holding places, that certain oaths shall be taken,



and also that the sacrament shall be received in a Protestant church. It is from religious scruples therefore that Dissenters are at all oppressed, as well as the Roman Catholics. Any political test, which shall be required of them, they have also long declared themselves willing to undergo. The only point upon which any difference is entertained, is that of the propriety of making the particular religious opinions of this body of men any objection to their holding political power in Great Britain. I confess that upon this question my opinion is now most decidedly made up, and the example of Ireland has operated most forcibly on my mind in convincing me that to do so is impolitic as well as unjust.

I shall not however stay to establish by any argument a truth which has



been recognized and acceded to in this country, so far at least as relates to Protestant Dissenters. But with regard to the policy of the disqualifications of the Roman Catholics, a topic so important in its nature and application to Ireland, and so materially connected with the subject of the present letter, it is impossible for me to be altogether silent.

The evil political tendency of the Roman Catholic faith is the principal ground upon which their enemies defend the laws enacted against them. But certainly the invocation of saints, doctrine of transubstantiation, and such tenets, are innocent to society. As to that spiritual supremacy which their *own* church acknowledges to be in the Pope, I think it cannot with justice be misconstrued and perverted into any denial

of his Majesty's title to be considered as Head of the Church of England. Neither is it equitable to infer that they are enemies to the established government because they differ from the established religion, when that inference is not only repelled by their own express declarations, but by a readiness to undergo the ordeal of any political test which it shall be thought necessary to impose on them.

Civil duties are distinct from and independent of religious opinions, and it seems to me that so long as they continue to be separated, the non-conformists to Protestantism have every right which justice can afford to be admitted to the enjoyment of the constitution under which they are born. Now it must be allowed by all parties, that by these laws some millions of subjects are deprived

of their otherwise natural birth-rights. Some great and commanding necessity can then alone justify this exclusion. These men are members of the state; they contribute their share, according to their ability, towards the expences of the state, they fight its battles both by sea and land; and why are they not admitted to enjoy every benefit and franchise which it can afford? It is nothing but idle talk to assert that the defence of the constitution being connected with that of the ecclesiastical establishment; the endangering of the one would at the same time be the undermining of the other. I am ready to allow the truth of the proposition in its fullest extent, because I am a friend to them both. But the proposition does not in the least apply to the point in dispute, unless

it can be first shewn that the Protestant religion would be endangered, for upon that must principally depend the existence of the ecclesiastical establishment in both kingdoms. But it seems to me that this religion is built upon a rock which no length of time will be able to overturn. It is not defending, but rather attacking the Protestant religion, to assert that it is maintained by any thing but its own evidences, truth, and merits; or even to infer that it will be endangered by an equitable toleration of other religions. As then the ecclesiastical establishment stands upon the same foundation with the Protestant religion, it would rather seem to add to the security of them both, by removing every ground of resentment against them. Is it not an eternal truth, 'that every religion which



which is persecuted becomes itself persecuting? As soon as by some accidental turn it arises from depression, it attacks the religion which persecutes it, not as a religion, but as a tyranny.' The security then of every religion and its establishment depends, first upon its truth and merits, and next on its toleration of other religions, for it then never fails of meeting from them a return of the like mildness and indulgence.

Religious toleration is thus not only the best policy which a state can possibly adopt, but it is also a principle of the law of nature, engraven in the hearts of all mankind. If I am called upon for the proof of this proposition; it is evident, from the absurdity of supposing for a moment that any created being has a right to force another, under the fear

of penalties, to think precisely as he does. I grant that if the law commands any one religion to be observed to the exclusion of others, the obligations of natural law are then superseded so far as they might influence the external conduct of any individual; but the free operations of his mind within itself are beyond the controul and jurisdiction of all statutes and edicts. They may be compared to space itself, 'a circle whose centre is every where, but whose circumference is no where.'

The positive laws of many nations have recognized this principle of natural justice. It has even been contended, and with great force of argument, that Toleration is one of the oldest principles even of the British constitution. The leading article of the great charter

of our liberties (and Irish liberties are our liberties, for nearly the same laws govern in both countries); the first article, I say, of Magna Charta directs that no man shall be disturbed in the exercise of his religion, and that the Church of England shall be *free*. And though the arrogant pretensions of the See of Rome formerly rendered it necessary to guard against its usurpations in these countries, yet that storm has long blown over, and that power long been shipwrecked. It is as ridiculous to suspect danger from the Court of Rome now, as it would be to dread the ambition of their renowned forefathers. We have lived to see the rod of St. Peter broken to pieces, and the ‘vicar of Christ upon earth’ hurled from his throne. The meridian of superstition has been occupied by the profelytes of atheism, and that power which once fulminated over Eu-

rope and affrighted the monarchs of the world, is now reduced to insignificance, and almost to contempt, if pity did not prevent it. Why should we then conjure up phantoms of departed greatness to alarm and terrify us? The Cæsars of the sword, and the Popes of the church, are both gone by. At distant periods from the present time and from each other, they have given us uneasiness, and we now may in safety despise them both.

The laws against the Roman Catholics appear therefore to me to be founded upon ridiculous, absurd, and antiquated principles of policy, totally inapplicable to the present times. Their existence without the necessity under the pressure of which they were enacted, is inconsistent with the policy of a liberal and enlightened nation. It is committing the great-



est injustice, and violating the true spirit both of natural and positive law. For, to punish a man for speculative opinions which have neither dangerous effects nor dangerous tendencies, is the highest injustice and the greatest violation of national freedom. It does this by creating disqualifications. To disqualify a man is to punish him by affixing the stigma of mistrust on him. Not even a life of service can wash away the disgrace or remove the jealousy of these laws. The army of Great Britain is filled with Scotch Dissenters, and the militia of Ireland is almost wholly composed of Catholics. And yet though they are trusted with arms in their hands, yet they still labour under suspicions of disaffection, and under proscriptions the most ungenerous and tyrannical.

There is a spirit of generosity which when adopted in the policy of a nation never fails of meeting with a full return of merit and services. I cannot, in casting my eye over the page of history, but recollect that the Romans knew the full value of this liberal principle. They granted the freedom of their city, with a full share of its honours and privileges, to Latium, to Italy, and lastly to the provinces. They sacrificed even their vanity, to the increasing their power. Virtue and merit was adopted as their own, wherever it was met with. Not even slaves or strangers, enemies or barbarians, were shut out. By shunning that narrow policy which had ruined Athens and Sparta; her strength increased with her good fortune, and as she gained her authority she was sure to confirm it.

With this renowned nation there was a free toleration of all religious, and even an adoption of the gods of all other nations into Rome. This association of all the divinities of the world, '*cette espèce d'hospitalité divine*,' (as Voltaire calls it) seems to have been common to almost all antiquity. As they had no peculiar dogmas, they had no religious wars. They perhaps might think that ambition and rapine shed enough of human blood without the aid of religion to exterminate mankind. It is remarked, that from the building of Rome till the reign of Domitian, there was no man ever persecuted for his private opinions. In Greece indeed there was one instance of it, and that instance was Socrates. But it is well known that the Athenians long repented of their conduct, and as proofs of their

contrition, punished his accusers and erected altars to his memory.

But this generous policy, this liberal and enlightened conduct, was suffered to die away, and the nations of modern history who rose out of the ashes of antiquity substituted other principles in their room. As Harrington has remarked in the preliminary to his *Oceana*, there is a 'meanness and poorness in modern prudence, not only to the damage of civil government, but of religion itself.' The effects of this narrow policy have been to cramp the spirit of free inquiry for many ages, and then to injure in the greatest degree the cause of religion. For when men whose minds were superior to ordinary prejudices came to reflect on this false policy, they have even inclined to doubt whether the discords, intol-



rances, and persecutions, which have accompanied the introduction of Christianity, have not more than counterbalanced the benefits which the world has received from it. They recollected that its earthly object was to promote peace and brotherly love: but that its real effects had been, to occasion more war and tumults than could be attributed to any other single cause. Its disciples had appeared even zealous to invent unintelligible doctrines on which differences in opinion might ensue. First the Trinity was a pretext for bloodshed, and then the doctrines of the Incarnation created a theological war of 250 years. But Christians, no longer shedding each other's blood about these subjects, next invented new creeds and articles about which they might persecute each other. It might

have been hoped that the Reformation would have stilled the flames of religious disputes amongst ourselves; but it has turned out otherwise. Men have not been wanting who have kept alive the spirit of church party, and converted ‘this madness of the *many* to the gain of the *few*\*.’ Human creeds and articles have been invented and made the tests of party, not the standards of truth. Those whose consciences have been large enough to swear to them, have found no inconvenience from their establishment: but as interest and conscience are often

\* The advocates for our modern Tests should consult an excellent paper of Sir Richard Steele’s in the *Spectator* (No. 376), where is related the story of the *day* watchman and his attendant the *goose*. Under this symbol, adds the author, you may enter into the manner and method of leading creatures with their eyes open through thick and thin, for they see not what, nor know not why.

at variance, the temptations to perjury are too great for a wise legislature ever to hold out.

Such are the conclusions which are drawn to the prejudice of religion itself. Philosophers of no ordinary stamp have then reverted to the policy of antiquity in seconding the habits of the superstitious part of every nation by the reflections of the enlightened. Unless this is done, they have thought that religion could produce no advantage to a state. Theological rancour only serves to imbitter the superstition of a people. If the Paganism of antiquity had any exclusive merit which Christianity has not yet been able to boast of, it was that mutual indulgence, that religious concord and universal spirit of toleration which is produced. Such was the mild spirit of antiquity,

that, as it has been well observed by an eloquent historian, ‘ nations were less attentive to the *differences* than to the *resemblances* of their religious worship\*.’

I must indeed confess, that I look forward to see the objections to christianity removed by the adoption of the same liberal and enlightened policy in these islands. I hope, and even trust, that the cause of universal toleration is every day gaining ground, and I could even wish to see Christians of every denomination united as the children of one God, as disciples of one faith, and as the coheirs of one and the same inheritance†.

At any rate however I am persuaded that before another century is elapsed our

\* Gibbon.

† Unius Dei parentis homines, consortes fidei, spei, cohæredes. M. Fel. 313. ed. Ouzeli.



posterity will wonder that the world could have been so long divided by a religion which ought to have united them ; that to the blessings of a free government will be added that of a free toleration ; and that our fellow-subjects will no longer be outraged by tests, nor by penal statutes.

Our well poised and balanced constitution will by this attain perfection ; for *religious power will then be balanced against religious power, as civil power has hitherto been against civil.* To the mutual dependence and mutual check of three legislative bodies, may be added that of the three sects of Christianity. In an imperial parliament of Great Britain and Ireland, the same principle which preserves the interests of King, Lords, and Commons, will preserve that of Roman Catholics, Protestants, and Dissenters. The authority of

England, Scotland, and Ireland, will give a due preponderance to the respective religions of the majority of each of their inhabitants. Three kingdoms will support and maintain inviolate their three separate modes of faith.

The Presbyterians and Roman Catholics of England will no longer suffer under unjust and invidious exclusions from power, nor the Catholics of Ireland under a local aristocracy and general proscription. By obliterating partial distinctions we shall insensibly coalesce into one great nation, united by language, manners, and civil institutions. We shall then be equal to the weight of a powerful empire. The annals of religious persecution and of Christian animosities will meet with a full and final period. The true ends of religion, which are to promote glory to

God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will towards men, will be fully attained. The true ends of a free constitution, which are to afford universal protection and happiness, will be enjoyed; and all men, parties, and opinions, will rally round a throne to support a government which will then be more deservedly than ever, what it has long continued, the envy and admiration of the world.

I am, &c. &c.

## LETTER IV.

OF SOME OTHER DISADVANTAGES UNDER WHICH THE IRISH NATION LABOURS IN AGRICULTURE, &c. &c.

*My dear Sir,*

ALTHOUGH government and religion are subjects which most engage the attention of mankind, and which I have therefore treated of in my two last letters, yet there are other topics still left behind which are of great importance. They are not, indeed, so much the objects which history celebrates, because history is little more than a record of the crimes of ambition; a kind of



knowledge which Lord Bacon well observes is ‘too much drenched in blood.’ But these topics, which we have still to discuss, are those upon which the happiness and greatness of nations most depend. That happiness may be varied by the degrees of freedom and security which governments are instituted to afford; but the first step towards the existence of happiness must depend upon the people’s possessing the necessaries and conveniencies of life.

It has therefore, you know, been considered by the writers on the science of politics, that the first duty which a state owes to its members, after protecting them from foreign invasion and domestic injustice; the first object of civil society, after it is organised, is to provide for the necessities of the people. Unless a go-

vernment takes care to furnish its subjects with an happy plenty of the necessaries and conveniencies of life, and protects them in the peaceable enjoyment of these advantages, it defeats the very end and object of its institution. Montesquieu observes, “ Quelques aumones que l'on fait à un homme nud dans les rues, ne remplissent point les obligations de l'état, qui doit à tous les citoyens une subsistence assurée, la nourriture, une vêtement convenable, et un genre de vie qui ne soit contraire à la santé\*.” Every individual who cannot command the comforts and conveniencies of life from wealth hereditary or acquired, has yet nevertheless an equivalent to give in exchange for them. This is his personal labour and industry. These must constitute the only titles of

\* De l'Esprit des Loix, liv. 23. ch. 29.

the majority of the people in every state to the possession of them.

A government, therefore, to fulfil its first duty, must encourage labour, animate industry, and excite abilities. It must take such measures that every man may live by his own honest exertions. It must propose honours, rewards, and privileges, for those who distinguish themselves. When it does these things, it has the effect of making the state powerful and the subjects happy. When it neglects them, the state is weak and the people are miserable.

But though this great charge is entrusted to the care of a legislator, yet every thing is not left to him to provide for. Nature has done her full share. She has given the earth to afford subsistence to its inhabitants, and every country, by the industry of its people, may enjoy the fruits of it. It is



therefore on the exertion of that labour, which a government must bring about, that it discharges its duty. Agriculture is the nurse of a state, and its surest and best resource. It is the most solid fund of wealth to a people, and, of all arts, it is by far the most useful and necessary \*. For though in some countries Nature has ren-

\* See the first volume of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, *passim*.—I take this opportunity of mentioning, that, in preparing this second edition for the press, I have carefully read over that laborious but admired work, with a view to the examination and correction of the arguments contained in this letter. In consequence of this, I have now inserted several short extracts from that work, particularly in the commencement of the letter where I judged that elucidation would be gained from them. But as these passages were mixed with other papers containing some of my own reflections, which had been made in the course of the last twelvemonth; I am almost afraid, that, from being under apprehensions lest I should mention his name in support of my own sentiments, and where I ought not to have done, I may have neglected to mention it in some few places where I ought to have done so. Note to 2d edit.



dered it almost unnecessary, by that fertility of soil and beauty of climate which she has given them, yet it is generally found that the state must hold out encouragement to it by proper laws and regulations. And though even in the most fertile countries the people enjoy the necessaries of life with less labour than in more barren countries, yet they cannot, on that account, be called rich or powerful. Neither land nor gold is wealth, but as it is made such by industry. Unless they can purchase the produce of other men's industry, and thereby save one's own labour, of what use are they? In a state of uncivilised society it is evident that every man must supply his own wants of every kind. He must seek his own food, build his own cottage, and procure his own clothing. But where industry is introduced into

society, and men, from being hunters or fishers, become polished beings, they learn to exchange the surplus produce of their lands, or the price of that produce, which is the same thing, for the labour of other people. It is the same with gold, or the profits made by lending gold to others; it is exchanged (and in the power of being exchanged consists its value) for labour. As we cannot well provide ourselves with all the necessaries, conveniences, and luxuries of life, it is evident that every man must be rich or poor, according as he can command them, or influence the people to provide them for him. A man might possess twenty miles of land around him in the wilds of America, and yet starve. The African is poor and destitute even in the midst of his golden sands. Even money is but an ar-

tificial standard for estimating the value of the produce of industry. It is only the representative of labour, whilst industry is the constituent, the real wealth, and without which the coin would be useless metal. But even when it receives its value from industry, it is intrinsically and of itself nothing more than a 'ticket or a counter,' which, the Scythian Anacharsis well remarked, only serves for the convenience of *calculation*.

But to hasten to my application of these principles: I have described the Irish nation as miserably destitute of all the comforts and conveniences of life. I have been told in reply, that they are an *indolent* people. I have acknowledged the truth of the remark, and have accordingly considered idleness as one of the characteristics of the nation, and have endeavoured to prove

that pride is a leading cause of it. But then I assert, that they would not be so if they were well governed, and that this vice might be easily counteracted. Industry may be roused by encouragement; it may be *created*, by exciting the passions of self-preservation or of self-interest. Unless employment is held out, it is unjust to accuse them of idleness: unless the means of enriching them are afforded and laid open, it is highly absurd to upbraid them with their poverty.

‘ In order to put industry into motion (says Adam Smith\*), three things are requisite: materials to work upon, tools to work with, and the wages or recompence for which the work is done. Money is neither a material to work upon, nor a tool to work with; and though the

\* Wealth of Nations, Vol. I. c. 2.



wages of workmen are commonly paid to him in money, yet his real revenue, like that of all other men, consists, not in the money, but in the money's worth; not in the metal pieces, but in what can be got for them.'

I assert that agriculture, which is the most natural means of employing industry, is in Ireland too much discouraged. Scarcely any thing but pasture lands are to be seen. Grazing of cattle is their grand passion. The farmer feels it his interest to devote his lands to it, and to neglect tillage. I am also credibly informed, that the cultivation of those lands which are laid out in tillage is in general so very defective, that not above half of the crops are gathered which the fertility of the soil could afford. The cause of this preference given to pasture is altoge-

ther a moral one: the farmer finds it his interest. But a legislator that regarded the happiness of the people, and the prosperity of the nation, would *make* it the interest of the farmer and of the landholder that agriculture should be cultivated as a science, and their lands and attention be dedicated to it.

Although the greater part of the countries of modern Europe have advanced the improvement of their agriculture by means of their manufactures and commerce; yet it is universally allowed by all, except the interested advocates of the mercantile system, that this order is contrary to the natural course of things, and therefore necessarily both slow and uncertain. ‘ Compare (says the same author above quoted\*) the slow progress of those

\* Wealth of Nations, Vol. II. 130.

countries of which the wealth depends very much upon their commerce and manufactures, with the rapid advance of our North American colonies, of which the wealth is founded altogether in agriculture. Through the greater part of Europe the number of inhabitants is not supposed to double in less than five hundred years. In several of the North American colonies it is found to double in twenty or five-and-twenty years.' No argument can possibly be more decisive in favour of the agricultural system than this one drawn from the subject of population, which follows plenty and riches as inseparably as the shadow does the substance.

The increase of pasture lands in England was formerly the subject of universal complaint, but by prudent regulations

England is now one of the best cultivated countries in the world. Might not the same means be adopted in Ireland, and with the same success? It is obvious that pasture lands afford employment to a comparatively small number of the inhabitants of a country, and food to much less than agriculture does. And though it may be said that the mode of living amongst the Irish is simple, and such as that bread is not a necessary article of consumption; yet, granting that this is partly true, I assert that the mode of living will not do every thing, and that it should even be the endeavour of laws to alter it *so as* to give employment to the people, and kindle among them a more general spirit of industry.

It is universally allowed that food will always purchase labour: it will excite as



much industry as it can maintain people. There is also no other line in which a given sum of money, or a given capital, will employ so much labour as in agriculture. Servants, cattle, and even nature herself, labour in the cause of agriculture. It is also the most secure employment for capital, always at home, exposed to none of the perils of the seas and of warfare, so that it is surprising it should not have more influenced the policy of modern Europe than trade has done. Independent, however, of its general advantages, I think its promotion is a remedy so peculiarly applicable to the case of Ireland, that I cannot but lament the disadvantages under which it here labours, and endeavour to point out the methods by which its prosperity may be probably established.

The first important disadvantage under which the peasantry of Ireland labour, and the removal of which may be considered as the best step that could be taken in order to promote the spirit of agricultural industry is, the non-residence of the greater part of landed proprietors on their estates. The sum of money which it is calculated, is annually sent out of the kingdom to the absentee-owners of estates, is enormous and incredible. I have heard it estimated at a very large portion indeed of the whole rental of the kingdom. This is undoubtedly not only injuring the nation at large, but is a grievance much more severely felt by the poor tenants of an estate. Instead of being gladdened with the presence of their landlord (as is universally the case in England for some months in the year

at least,) and in consequence of which they enjoy their share in the ‘ returned fruits of their own industry, circulating back through the channels from whence it originally flowed;’ they are obliged to labour for far-distant masters, who are perfect strangers to them.

The rich man here is not that ‘ distributing medium’ by which great wealth in a single hand, becomes more beneficial to the community, than the same income would be if divided amongst a number of individuals. One wealthy proprietor has it in his power to employ more industry, to hire more labourers, to encourage more manufacturers both of the necessaries and of the luxuries of life, and to reward and patronize in a greater degree the professors of the fine arts, than could possibly be done if his fortune

were to be portioned out amongst a dozen different people. If this were not the case in other countries, the inequality of property would be so much felt, as could not be endured. By it alone the other disadvantages of enormous wealth in the hands of a few individuals, is completely counterbalanced. To the want then of the residence of large landed proprietors in their own country, may be attributed, in a great measure, the very low state at which the fine arts are at present in Ireland (inasmuch so that scarce a picture or a statue are to be found out of Dublin and its neighbourhood); and to their non-residence on their estates a great share of the causes of the neglect of agriculture. But this has been so much, and for so long a time, a topic of invective with the well wishers of Ireland,



and with all so very obvious a truth, that I forbear enlarging further on it.

The leading principle of agricultural policy, against which the abovementioned evil militates, as do also those others which I shall hereafter enumerate, is, that the *farmer should have a certain prospect of enjoying a great share of, if not the entire fruits of his own labour.*

For this reason it should be the object of the legislature to prevent, if possible, all strangers to the estate from enjoying any profits from it. It is well known that in Ireland there are very frequently three or four intermediate landlords between the farmer and the owner of the estate. In order that these mesne holders may enjoy a considerable advantage from their bargains, they are obliged to tie down the poor peasant to the most

exorbitant rents, and rack him in the most unmerciful manner. It has always been the policy of the law of England to discourage as much as possible these under tenancies or sub-infeudations. Their effects are, to enrich strangers and interlopers, by the impoverishment of the estate, by the owner's deprivation of his just profits, and by the plunder of the terre-tenant. It is to be lamented that the Parliament of Ireland have never attempted a remedy to this evil.

Upon the same principle of securing to the farmer the fruits of his industry, he should also be secured in his possession by a long lease at a fixed rent. I am willing to allow that long leases may be dispensed with in those countries where confidence in the landlord supplies the place of them; but this cannot pos-

sibly be the case in Ireland for the reasons above given. The farmer should also have secured to him the advantage of every improvement which he shall make, which a long lease is certainly best calculated to afford. He is then better satisfied with paying a high rent, because he is secure in his possession of the land for such a term of years as gives him time to recover his first losses, and make a profit by the further improvement of the land. If the farmer works for the benefit of another and not for his own, his industry will proportionably abate. If the advantages of all improvements are not secured to himself, his rent must be low, if it is a fair rent; if it is high, he will not be able to pay it; and in either case is it reasonable to expect that he will be at the expence and trouble of making improvements?

Instead of this, the fact almost universally throughout this country is, that the farmers have short leases for three or five years, without any confidence, and with very high rents. If the farmer make any improvement, it is made an argument for raising his rent upon the renewal of the lease, as if the middle-man (or landlord) had made the improvement himself. But the truth is, that improvements are never made, because the farms at the expiration of the leases are always put up to auction, and given to whoever will bid the most rent for them.

This avaricious conduct on the part of those who have the letting out of farms, creates what I may reckon as a third disadvantage under which agriculture lies in Ireland. This is the want of what is called in England 'a tenant-right,' or moral claim on the landlord for a renewal



of the lease at a fair rent. No proprietor can be justified in taking more rent than the surplus amounts to, which the farmer has in his hands after paying all his expences and deducting his usual profits. These expences are the instruments of husbandry, the stocking the farm with cattle, the feed, the wages of labourers, and the maintenance of the farmer's family. But no attention can possibly be paid to these circumstances in letting farms in Ireland, when they are always given to those who will pay the most rent for them, on the expiration of the short leases. The poor tenants therefore who are so ignorant as not to know the circumstances which should determine the quantum of rent, and being actuated by a spirit of rivalry necessarily existing amongst them under such circumstances, offer much more rent

than they can afford, and so much as 'eats up the whole produce of the land!'

The consequence of this putting farms up to auction is, that the farmer by paying so high a rent is not only kept so poor as never to be able to accumulate sufficient capital to make improvements, which are expensive; but even if he had capital, the shortness of his term would prevent him from making them, because he could not have time to re-imburse himself with profit, before his rent would be raised, or he would be turned out to make room for one who offered more rent, on account of the increase in the produce of the farm, which the improvements had occasioned.

The next disadvantage under which it appears to me that agriculture lies in this country, is the small size of the generality

of farms. I do not however think that very large farms are advantageous to cultivation, though perhaps very small ones are less so, but that there is in this as in other things, a just medium. In Ireland the farms are almost universally in the extreme of diminutiveness. The tenant is therefore reduced to the condition of a labourer, and as his rent is high, he is not only incapable of accumulating capital, but even of paying himself that which otherwise must have been expended as the wages of labour. A miserable subsistence is all that he can possibly aspire to.

Upon the same principle of excluding strangers to the estate from deriving any of those profits which ought to belong to the farmer, the legislature should remedy what I shall mention as the last, though it is not the least, grievance under which

the peasants of Ireland labour. In this light I consider Tythes. I shall not enter into any discussion of the *right* which the clergy have to tythes, because I do not think that it can be well questioned; nor shall I assert that they are rigorously exacted in Ireland, because I believe the fact to be otherwise: I shall only observe, that if in England they are always reluctantly paid and are considered as oppressive, in Ireland they are highly impolitic as well as tyrannical. They operate as a bounty upon pasturage, and occasion the neglect of tillage in this country, more than any other cause whatsoever. What farmer also will be at the expence of making improvements, when a priest, who pays no share of that expence, is to seize upon a large share of the profits? In rich and fertile countries, the tythe



of the produce of land is often great enough to pay the farmer's rent, or 'to replace his capital employed in cultivation, together with a just and moderate profit on it.' Under the pressure of such an incumbrance, particularly under the circumstances of the case in Ireland, it is hardly to be wondered at, that this alone, independent of the other discouragements to agriculture which I have above enumerated, should have kept it at that very low ebb in which, notwithstanding what has been done for it, it still continues.

The peasant, after discharging his rent to his landlord, has to pay tythes to a clergy which he abhors, and then to contribute his dues towards the maintenance of his own Catholic pastor.

Between the burdens which are imposed on him by the whole three, his

oppression is most extreme. His slavery is both temporal and spiritual; but the latter is necessarily the most galling. It is indeed true, that his socage or lay landlord is obliged to content himself with the payment of rent 'wrung from the peasant by hands habituated to the gripings of usury.' His power of *distress* is certainly exerted to its utmost extent. But between the landlord and the tenant, however far they may be removed from each other, there is still some natural as well as legal privity or relationship. Between the peasant, however, who is a Roman Catholic, and the Protestant clergyman, there cannot possibly exist the least. Religious as well as popular prejudices will therefore be always so combined as to make the tythe claimant (notwithstanding all that can be said in favour

of him) as an odious stranger who is allowed by law to plunder the farmer. But the grievance does not end here. As if to make tythes still more odious and oppressive to the tenant, he has after paying them to satisfy the demands of his own priest, who like a lord in the old feudal tenure of frankalmoigne, brandishing the two-edged sword of St. Peter (with all the weight which the superstition of the fourteenth century gave to it in England, and which it still has in Ireland), *exact*s his homage, and his fealty, and his *free alms*, with the most inexorable severity. Though I should therefore be sorry to see the property of the church under the present mild Protestant establishment which exists in Ireland;—though I say I should be sorry to see it confiscated, and the owners of it thrown

destitute on the charity of the world like the clergy of another neighbouring kingdom; yet under all the circumstances of complicated hardship under which the Irish peasantry pay tythes, I would recommend, if not an abolition of them, at least that some substitute should be contrived which should rather encourage than discountenance industry.

It is for these various reasons that the Irish farmers prefer laying out their lands in pasture rather than in tillage. It is to them a much more profitable speculation. Pasture lands are kept in order at a much less expence than the other. They do not require the purchasing and maintenance of cattle for the plough; the buying and keeping in order all the various implements of husbandry; the



expence of sending corn to market, which last, if the farmer lives at any distance, must be very great; but, what is of still greater weight with him, they pay no tythes. Cultivation is therefore neglected, because the great expence, skill, and labour, which attend it, are not sufficiently rewarded.

But, granting that even these great checks to agriculture and industry were retained, still a wise legislature might probably find means to counteract their bad effects. If the peasant, notwithstanding them, can gain more profit by agriculture than by pasturage, he will adopt it. The legislature should ensure him of it, and the example of other countries will shew how successfully the attempt has been made.

This has arisen from considering corn

not merely as an article of provision or necessary food, but as an article of merchandize, or as the object of commerce. In order that the farmer should grow not only as much as is necessary for subsistence, but sometimes even more by the certainty of having a good market, and getting a good price for it; the system of giving *bounties on exportation* has been introduced into Great Britain, and even latterly into Ireland with some advantage, but not sufficiently to counteract the many obstacles which lay in the way of its success. As perhaps you are not well acquainted with the nature of this system, and as it has lately been decried, for no other reason, as I think, than because it has not been well understood, I shall trouble you with a very few words on the subject. In order to insure a plentiful growth of corn,

the farmer is made sure of disposing of it to advantage. When the plenty is such that he cannot get a fair price at home, it is made up to him by the government's paying him a bounty on his sending it abroad. By the assistance of it, the merchant is enabled to undersell all competitors in the foreign market. By the quantity of exports being thus increased, the balance of trade is turned in favour of the country, whilst all the people are enriched. Instead of the subject paying heavy duties to the state on exportation, the state finds its interest in paying him to do it. Before this principle was adopted in England, and before she cultivated corn for other nations as well as for herself, the agriculture of England was very inconsiderable. It was in the beginning of the reign of



Elizabeth, that the exportation of corn first commenced by the permission of the legislature, and Camden observes that 'agriculture from that moment received new life and vigour.' It is therefore to this policy, combined with that of the Navigation Act, that the best French writers on the subject have finally attributed the whole superiority in commercial greatness which England enjoys over all the other nations of Europe\*.

In order to prevent every inconvenience which may result from sending too much corn out of a kingdom, nothing is so easy as to take off these bounties upon proper occasions, and lay them on the

\* Les Interêts de la France mal entendus dans les Branches de l'Agriculture, &c. 2 vols. 12mo. at Amsterdam, 1757, supposed to be written by Mr. Bou-lainvilliers : see vol. i. p. 93 to 111, and vol. ii. p. 123. See also L'Ami des Hommes, vol. iii. p. 259.



*importation* of it, at the same time that heavy duties are laid on exporting it.

Other expedients have also been sometimes successfully adopted, for the same purpose. Such is the establishment of granaries or public magazines of corn. By this institution the farmer is always sure of having a certain price for his corn, because the market can never be overstocked in the commodity. Neither is it possible that there should ever be too small a quantity in it. When from the great plenty there is any danger of the price getting too low, the government purchases the overplus after private individuals have bought what they wanted. But when, on the other hand, the scarcity is such that the price must rise above its just standard, the granaries are then opened, and every inconvenience is obviated.

But though this policy is adopted with advantage in Switzerland, in order to prevent the corn of the country being sold at too low a rate to foreigners, from whom it has been sometimes necessary to purchase it back again at an exorbitant price; yet it has been generally found that a well regulated system of exportation is the best encouragement to agriculture. It is found more effectually to prevent pernicious monopolies. It is also recommended by the advantages it affords to navigation, and the number of seamen it employs in the management of the vessels which are engaged in the carriage of corn to foreign countries.

I am however fully aware that Dr. Adam Smith, the ingenious and learned author of the 'Wealth of Nations,' (a work of great judgment

and accuracy, but which does not possess so much originality in its principles as is commonly supposed,) has made some objections to the system of bounties on exportation. I cannot however think them applicable to the peculiar case of Ireland, whatever may be their merit in a general point of view, which has also been questioned by the best judges. His objections are that they diminish the home market in order to encourage the foreign, and operate as a double tax upon the people; first the tax which they are obliged to contribute in order to pay the bounty; and secondly the tax which arises from the advanced price of the commodity in the home market, and which, as the whole body of the people are purchasers of corn, must in this particular commodity be paid by the whole body of the people\*.

\* B. iv. c. 5.



To the first objection that they would diminish the home market, I answer, that in the case of Ireland, it must proceed upon an assumption by no means admitted. This is, that the home market is in such a state of prosperity, as to be susceptible of injury from any attempt made to improve agriculture. I confess I do not think it at all resembles the sensitive plant, which, if you ‘touch it, it shrinks; if you press it, it dies.’ The fact, on the contrary, is, that the home market is in that most deplorable state which may perhaps by some successful experiment be improved, but which cannot ever be injured.

It should also be recollected that Dr. Smith’s opinion is confined to those cases in which bounties are given to agriculture, to the discouragement of manufactures, and that all he contends for



is, that both should be left free, open, and unconfined. But in the present instance it is not meant to force the industry of the country from its natural channel into another which is deemed more profitable, but to raise, quicken, and extend the whole labour of the kingdom. It is intended to counteract the discouragement under which agricultural industry lies from the operation of moral causes. It is proposed to enable it to raise its head, notwithstanding the oppressions of landlords and exactions of the clergy. We are therefore so far from differing in opinion with Dr. Smith, that in this our ideas meet each other, that both agriculture and manufactures should be put upon a level, and treated impartially. It is evident that this can never be the case, unless something is done to relieve tillage

from those burthens and discouragements under which it now droops.

It is also said that a bounty operates as a double tax. To this it may be answered, that, so far as the expence of putting in practice that system must be levied by government upon the people, it is certainly a tax. But this is the object we are contending for, upon the principle that the general advantages produced to the community, in consequence of it, more than counterbalance that inconvenience. It is parting with a little, in order that the general plenty and prosperity of the country may be increased in a tenfold degree. It never can operate as a double tax by also raising the price of the commodity in the home market, because, upon Dr. Smith's own principles, if corn became dear at home, or even advances

in price above that fair and equitable standard at which it is meant to be kept, the natural consequence must be, that the exportation trade would undoubtedly checked. The farmer would hurry his corn to the home market, where he would get a better price than he could have by exporting it, notwithstanding the bounty. The natural effect of this would be to restore the market to its former level. The same fluctuations prevail in every trade. If the profits become suddenly greater in one line than those which are got in another in which capital is usually employed, every body is transferring his capital from those other trades into this new channel which promises so much wealth. This restores the profits of that line to its ordinary level, by making the supply of the market greater

than the demand for the commodity. On the other hand, if by any accident the profits should be less than those of other trades, every merchant shifts his capital from the unprofitable channel to some more promising one, which again restores the level price of the market by making the demand equally great, and upon a footing, with the supply. It is evident from this reasoning, that if the system of exportation diminished too greatly the home market, and raised the price of the corn in it, the evil would afford its own remedy. The exportation would naturally cease, because the profits to be made at home would surpass those to be had by sending the commodity to a foreign market.

I will not attempt seriously to refute an objection brought against this system of



exportation from its liability to produce frauds. It may be said that corn can be shipped as if for exportation, in order to get the bounties, and be afterwards re-landed at some other part of the country. But if this deserved an argument to shew its fallacy, it may be said that nothing could be so easy as that custom-house officers should take care that when a corn vessel was cleared out, she should be required to contain proper documents on board, to ascertain her port of lading and port of discharge, at the same time that it should be made highly penal to land the goods at any other than the appointed port, except forced by bad weather. But it is absurd to argue against laws from the evasions which they sometimes meet with, and must necessa-

rily be exposed to. Nobody would seriously think proper to deny the government a revenue, because it gives rise to the mischief of smuggling.

Upon the whole, I will venture to assert, that whatever disadvantages the system of giving bounties on the exportation of corn is liable to in a general point of view, and from a superficial consideration of the subject; all these are obliterated by a *well regulated* system of that nature, which is what I am contending for. In times of plenty, let not the farmer be deprived of his just profits, and agriculture be discouraged by the price of corn falling below its proper level. Let the public be always supplied at a reasonable price, and let the farmer send his surplus produce abroad, underselling rival nations by means of the encouragement received at home.

In times of scarcity, on the contrary, natural interest will make him bring his commodity to the home market; by its producing a better price there than at the foreign one. It will not even be necessary to remove the bounty on exportation, because the amount of it, even when added to the price at the foreign market, will not amount to the profits to be made by the sale of the commodity at home. In times of extraordinary scarcity, indeed, the usual resource must be had recourse to, of giving bounties on the importation instead of on the exportation of corn.

I am not however so far an advocate for the system of bounties on exportation as to be convinced that they are preferable to those on *production* which are recommended by Dr. Smith. All I contend for is, that something should be done



for the agriculture of Ireland, and that bounties of some sort seem to be the most likely remedy to counteract the numerous disadvantages under which it lies. I am not one of those political economists who would depress manufactures and commerce, to encourage tillage. Let them both be put upon an equal footing. Agriculture is indeed the most solid and durable wealth of the two, not being subject to injury from hostilities, which manufactures and foreign trade are. Without the foreign market the manufacturers cannot sell their commodities ; but the farmer is not subject to the same inconveniences. Let therefore this natural source of wealth be improved, and if no better means can be devised, let not the government reject too hastily That which has been found by experience, if not



always to produce much good, yet at least never to occasion any mischief.

These are the expedients to which Great Britain has had recourse, in order to bring its agriculture to that pitch of improvement at which it now stands. She was formerly frequently obliged to have recourse to other nations for support. But the case is now far otherwise. Nothing but the accidental badness of the seasons can lessen the happy plenty she enjoys\*. Why have not similar pains and attention been bestowed by the Irish legislature on the important subject of agriculture, and the

\* The present high price of provisions in England, occasioned by the badness of seasons and the burthens necessarily imposed on the people for carrying on the war, and which must of course produce a proportionate rise in the price of all the necessaries of life (with corn amongst the rest), is no objection to the truth of this eulogium on the state of English agriculture.—  
(Note to 2nd edit. October 15, 1800.)

system of bounties been as steadily and wisely persisted in? Why, instead of lavishing the revenues of the state in support of idle placemen, in the maintenance of destructive factions, and in building ridiculous edifices, has she not devoted part of them to counteract the abuses which oppress the peasantry, and discourage agriculture and industry? She might with half the expence which the maintenance of her aristocracy has cost the nation, have been as flourishing in agriculture as Great Britain herself is, and have supplied the necessities of the parent country, whenever misfortunes should require it. Thousands of famished subjects might have been employed in the cultivation of the earth, and the peasants would have found their native country the seat of plenty and happiness, instead of being the

lowest sink of poverty and wretchedness.

Every country is capable of feeding its own inhabitants ; but the soil and climate of Ireland are so excellent, that with good cultivation it might contribute towards supporting its neighbours. For, though the quantity of unprofitable land is very great ; though, if you calculate the bogs, the rocks and the barren mountains, that quantity is perhaps more than double what is to be seen in England ; yet the fertility of the remainder, and the temperature of the air, amply compensate for the defect. The country possesses the convenience of safe ports and havens in a greater degree perhaps than any other European nation. But yet, notwithstanding all these advantages, the fact is, that the greater part of the provisions which are consumed in the country are brought from England. The



poor, not having the means of purchasing these, are in want of common sustenance, without either house or clothes to shelter them from the inclemencies of the weather.

The reason of this misery may be traced to that want of employment in which the bulk of the people live. From witnessing the miseries produced by indolence, I could be easily led to write an homily in praise of industry. But I shall never forget the sentiments of the best scholar and most virtuous man of his age, upon that subject. ‘If (says Dr. Isaac Barrow) the water runneth, it holdeth clear, sweet, and fresh; but stagnation turneth it into a noisome pool: if the air is fanned by winds, it is pure and wholesome; but being shut up it groweth thick and putrid. If metals be employed, they abide smooth



and splendid, but lay them up and they soon contract rust: if the earth is adorned with culture it yieldeth sevenfold, but lying neglected it will soon be overgrown with brakes and thistles; and the better the soil is, the ranker the weeds it will produce. All nature is upheld in being, order, and state, by constant agitation. Can any poor conceits of mine be necessary on the subject after this simple, clear, and yet elegant passage, which exhibits the '*simplex munditiis*' in all its charms? Can any thing be more effectually urged to convince you that industry is the architect of all that is stately, ornamental, or useful in society? that it has built magnificent bridges that we may safely pass over rivers, and reared astonishing aqueducts, that rivers may be made to pass over our heads: that it has framed ships

by which the most distant countries are connected, and invented letters by which the most remote ages are inseparably linked and blended together: in short, that it is the source of all wealth, grandeur, and prosperity; that it has done every thing which civilizes mankind and adorns the world; that it has bent the haughty soul of man to an obedience to laws and government, and that it has even subjected the creation to his command.

I have said that I would not write an homily, and yet the subject has almost led me into one. I will therefore confine myself to mere fact. I will assert that the industry of the lower classes of the people, who are, or at least ought to be, the life blood of every state; of the farmers, manufacturers, and labourers; is too fatally checked by discontents, and stifled by a load of oppressions; that all

improvements in agriculture are thwarted by the covetousness of landlords, and the exactions of the clergy; and that the legislature does not sufficiently counteract these checks, but are satisfied with sacrificing the good of the nation to their own private interests.

Such is the deplorable condition in which Ireland stands with respect to agriculture. The first means by which every civilized nation exerts the industry of its inhabitants, and provides for their wants, is thus neglected. That duty of providing food and clothing, with the other ordinary conveniences of life, which I have observed that every government owes to its subjects, is left undischarged. Instead of fulfilling the higher duties of advancing the nation to a state of true felicity by education, virtue, and real piety, it stops short in the very threshold, by leaving



them unprovided with the necessaries of life.

After corn it is probable that fuel may be reckoned the next necessary of life. With respect to coals it is rather unfortunate, that though Ireland possesses several coal mines, at Ballycastle in the north, and Duncannon in the county of Tyrone; and probably at other places which I have not heard of or do not recollect; yet she has always hitherto been supplied with that article from Great Britain. The principal cause of this has probably been a want of spirit and industry in the nation. It is true that some parliamentary encouragement has been extended to this particular. But all endeavours have hitherto completely failed. Perhaps at some future period, and that not very distant, when the industry of the



nation shall be set at work by the impulse of capital, the Irish will enjoy the riches which Providence has bestowed on their soil. The coal trade may then, amongst other things, prove a valuable speculation to some enterprising individuals, and a national blessing to the community at large.

But with respect to agriculture, the most solid and permanent source of wealth to a nation, it sometimes happens that a nation destitute of the means of promoting it, still enjoys all the advantages of it from the encouragement of trade, manufactures, and commerce. This has been more particularly the case with Holland. The unremitting industry of its people has surmounted even the obstacles which nature had thrown in their way. In the midst of their marshes and fogs, without either soil or climate to favour them, they became

a rich and powerful nation. They made even the tides stop short and the ocean give way to their industry. Without either agriculture or even manufactures of their own, they grew rich and powerful by becoming the carriers of the productions of other nations. Let us then see what is the state of manufactures and commerce in Ireland.

Excepting their linen trade, which is carried on in the North, there is scarce any other very considerable manufacture in the kingdom. And yet it has often been asserted by those esteemed competent judges of the subject, that the country is very favourable to the establishment of many others. If they could only find means to increase the stock of public industry, and lessen the number of the idle and indolent, they would find both their

manufactures and agriculture gain incredible advantages. The connexion between the two is so great, that an improvement in the one will be generally found to improve the other. The gains of the manufacturer create a market for the farmer's corn. The farmer will lay out his lands in tillage, in order that with the profits he may purchase the luxuries of life. Thus are these two employments mutually subservient to each other's advantage. The advancement of foreign trade also introduces such foreign articles as spur the industry of the farmer. Whether he works for the necessaries or the luxuries of life, the advantage to the state is equally great. But foreign commerce, as it gains ground, is more extensively beneficial ; for it furnishes materials for new manufactures, enriches the finances of the



state, and promotes refinement. Wherever commerce ‘spreads her wings, there civilization is ever found to flourish.’ But it is perfectly unnecessary for me to be lavish in encomiums on a subject which in theory affords no difference of opinion, the advantages of it being allowed and admitted on all hands.

The sum total of what I have advanced may be comprised in very few words. Every government should support its people. The wealth of a state is its industry. That industry must be exercised on agriculture, manufactures, and commerce. All these three are connected with each other, and mutually improve or decline together. Agriculture is checked by a want of stock in the farmer, which arises from not having a proper interest in the soil, and security in the exclusive enjoyment of the pro-



fits derived from the improvement of it. It does not seem that the Irish government has taken sufficient pains to counteract these obstacles by giving bounties, or by obliging landlords to take part of their rent in corn, as was formerly done almost every where, and is still the case in some places. Neither are the aids of manufactures and commerce in a sufficiently flourishing condition to exalt their fallen sister.

Without the market which trade affords, how is the farmer to pay his landlord, to pay the taxes of the state, to pay his tithes to two clergymen, and then with what remains to support himself and his family? Without the assistance of agriculture, how is the manufacturer to do the same? Where little corn is grown, that little must be sold very dear; which obliges

the Irish manufacturer to sell his commodity at a price proportionate to what he pays for food. Even Irish linens therefore require English bounties to find a market, or other nations would undersell them by many degrees. Thus, whilst tillage languishes and is neglected, trade is fettered, and the people are in a state of poverty and wretchedness.

If I were called upon to name any one cause which it was probable occasioned this general poverty in the agricultural, manufacturing, and commercial systems, more than any other single principle; I should undoubtedly mention the *high rate of interest for money* in Ireland. In a moral point of view I shall leave it to others to examine. With respect however to its influence on agriculture and trade, I shall conclude this long letter with very briefly

pointing out what appear to me to be insurmountable objections to it.

Capital is That which more than any thing else is wanted in Ireland. It is this alone which can put industry into motion and give it animation. Political economists have therefore laid it down as an axiom, that the industry of no nation can ever exceed what its capital can employ. It is with capital that the materials to work upon and the tools to work with are purchased; it is with capital that the workmen, the manufacturers, or the labourers, are paid their wages; it is with capital that the merchant fits out his ship and cargo, the manufacturer increases the number of his hands, and the farmer improves his lands. Upon this therefore, as upon a *pivot*, the activity of merchants, manufacturers, and farmers, must altogether turn.



As then there exists this extraordinary want of capital amongst these people, what can be the reason why it is not procured by loan? Can any thing be more obvious than that the reason must be, because the rate of interest which is to be paid for it, eats up too large a share of the casual profits to be acquired by the employment of it? None of these descriptions of men will therefore borrow money, which they must pay so high a price for.

In the first place, with respect to commerce, I should beg to know what must be the condition of Irish merchants in their dealings with other nations, when they are obliged to pay a higher rate of interest for the money they borrow than other merchants obtain their capitals for? The English trader pays five per cent, the Dutch perhaps three or four, and other



commercial nations in the same proportion, whilst the Irish merchant will perhaps find a difficulty in getting money at six, the legal rate of interest. The necessary consequence of this is, that the other nations must undersell the Irish merchant in the foreign market. Nothing then but a most extensive commerce, can enable him to make it worth his while to continue his dealings: the effect of which is that the profession of a merchant must be confined, as it now is, to a few projectors and adventurers.

But granting for a moment that a few individuals are to be found hardy enough to engage in trade, it will follow that, supposing they trade, as most young beginners generally do, upon borrowed money; the payment of this high rate of interest must entirely run away with

their profits. I have therefore no hesitation whatever in asserting that the commercial prosperity of every European nation must depend upon the legislature's establishing a low rate of interest.

The same effects are observable on agriculture and manufactures. The improvement of land requires capital. The Irish farmer is, as I have before shewn, unable to save money out of the profits of his land; he must therefore borrow it. But then the interest which he must pay for it, by eating up the profits which he could make by the employment of capital, frustrates the very end for which he requires it. In like manner the poor manufacturer whose gain is small on account of the dearness of his materials, of labour, and of all the necessaries of life, will not hazard the embarking borrowed capital

in a speculation, which if it succeeds, his profits must go to pay the interest, and if he fails, bankruptcy and ruin are the inevitable consequences.

I have thus finished this deplorable picture in all its parts, and have endeavoured to point out a want of legislative wisdom, which I cannot but suspect to be the cause of it. To conclude.—Neither has the government (thus neglecting to supply the wants of the people by calling their industry into action) instituted any parochial provision for the poor throughout the kingdom, to supply the omission. The poor laws of England first began upon the dissolution of the monasteries, and perhaps as many poor were then thrown upon the public, as there are at present in Ireland. The government however soon afforded relief to their dis-



trefs, by quartering them upon the parishes to which they severally belonged. From hence has sprung up a volume of laws, rules, and regulations, somewhat indeed confused, disorderly, and operating in many cases as a great grievance; yet undoubtedly displaying the charity and benevolence of the nation, and that spirit of humanity which makes them submit to inconveniences for the support of their fellow creatures. I am not therefore sure that I would recommend the adoption of our system of poor laws into Ireland. There would be so many calls for the benefit of this relief in Ireland, that the nation would be unable to bear the expences of it. It can only be established as the auxiliary of a great trade, to provide for the few hands which the labour of an industrious nation leaves without maintenance.



Unless a nation is rich, it can never maintain its poor, for the poor then becomes the nation itself. The bulk of every state must support itself by its industry, for the advantages of fortune are necessarily confined to very few. When the majority maintain themselves, the minority may then expect some relief. But for a small minority to support a large majority of the population, is one of those paradoxes in politics, which the benevolence of no nation ever attempted to put in practice, or the eccentricity of any sophist to illustrate and recommend. 'There is not a more necessary or more certain maxim in the frame and constitution of society, than that every individual must contribute his share in order to the well-being of the community: and surely they must be very deficient in sound policy, who

suffer one half of a parish to continue idle, dissolute, and unemployed; and at length are amazed to find that the industry of the other half is not able to maintain the whole.' Such is the remark of the only excellent (and at the same time elegant) commentator on her laws which England can boast of. If this observation of the incomparable Blackstone, is applicable to parishes, how much more is it to a whole kingdom?—and if so, to the case of Ireland?

I am, &c. &c.

## LETTER V.

OF THE CAUSES OF THE LATE  
REBELLION, &c.

*My dear Sir,*

WHEN I first took upon myself the task of visiting Ireland, and of personally looking into the state and condition of that kingdom, I was fully apprised of the many difficulties and obstacles with which I had to encounter. I was sensible how delicate the nature of the subject was into which I was about to inquire, and how much that delicacy was increased by the times and existing circumstances. The minds of the people would be sore, and bruised almost to death

with political differences, which had cost them so much pain and anxiety. I had even to apprehend that a question might give uneasiness, or be the means of exciting alarm and suspicion. Where every man must look with reserve and distrust on his neighbour; where experience had shewn the possibility of meeting with an enemy in the disguise of a friend or nearest inmate; I knew that to inquire would be to rankle a deep and deadly wound; and to put my own observations to the test, by communicating them to those best capable of judging of their truth and accuracy, would be engaging in a work of dangerous and uncertain hazard, and be treading over the mournful embers of half extinguished fires\*.

\* *Periculosa plenum opus aleæ  
Tractas, et incedis per ignes  
Suppositos cineri doloso.*



Since my arrival in Ireland, I have found all these apprehensions realized to their full amount. But yet the importance of the information which I was desirous of obtaining, urged me on to prosecute my inquiries with alacrity and perseverance. It is true my resolutions cost me some pain in the execution, but I considered that the spirit of inquiry ought not to be damped by considerations of that nature. I had embarked in the cause, and was determined to prosecute my voyage to the end. As for those who might be inclined to judge severely of my conduct, I left them to take into the account, the agent, and the object of the action on which they were about to pass sentence. I found, that even in Ireland the name of an Englishman carries with it that weight and respect which has long

flattered our pride in foreign countries. In Ireland, too, every man is sensible how much the prosperity and dearest interests of the two countries are linked and blended together. They are conscious, that whatever shock is received by the one, must run with electrical force and rapidity through the other. What considerations had I then to deter me from my object? I had only to look into the state of the country, and to hear the tale of those who have been witnesses and sufferers in the calamities which it had experienced.

When I first landed in Ireland, I spent a few days in Dublin, and then visited the country which had been the theatre of the late rebellion. In the capital, I observed the streets were crowded with the widows and orphans of those who

had fallen in battle: In the country I beheld the villages every where burnt and razed to the ground. Every thing I cast my eyes on, presented the melancholy features of ruin and desolation. I was resolved to make myself master of the real causes of the unhappy differences which had subsisted. I inquired of the Protestant landlord, and he told me that it was a Catholic war. I turned to the Dissenter (for such in every sense of the word he evinced himself to be), and he answered, that it was an insurrection of the peasantry against their cruel masters—that it was like the celebrated La Jacquerie of France; and that the oppression of the natural aristocracy of the country had occasioned so much bloodshed. When I resorted in the last place to the Catholic (for in Ireland the distinctions of religion

mark men more than any thing else, and are the cause of all other distinctions) and pressed him to inform me what he considered to be the causes and the objects of the late civil commotions, he assured me, that it was brought about entirely by the partisans of French principles. He added, that it was no war of religion; because none of the Catholics of Cork, Waterford, Limerick, Clare, Galway, or of any part of the kingdom, except those of the few counties in which the rebellion broke out, were at all implicated in it; that the Catholics of Wicklow and Wexford were necessarily so, because all the peasantry there were of that religion.

Amidst these various and contradictory opinions how was I to discover the truth? This alone I could ascertain with precision, that the whole nation was con-



vulsed with jarring interests and irreconcilable animosities; that these were the primary causes of the rebellion; and that, whilst they subsisted, Ireland must still continue the unhappy country which I then beheld it.

The inquiry then shifted to, What are these contending interests? what the causes of them? and what is it that has kindled them into the flame of civil war? I divided the inquiry into a political and a religious one. I hoped that this division would satisfy my curiosity, as the prism by separating a ray of lights shews its component parts in their true colours. An examination into the practical merits of the government led me to a knowledge of the general state of the country. An inquiry into the religious differences of Ireland fully informed me of the condi-

tion of each particular class of its inhabitants. You have had the result of both these researches. But they only acquaint you with the primary causes of the rebellion, not with the proximate or immediate ones. I proceed therefore to develop the circumstances in the state of parties which led more directly to the rebellion.

Since the accession of his present Majesty to the throne, many attempts have been made by successive viceroys to diminish the overgrown power of the aristocracy of the country. All these however failed of effect, because they wanted the cordial co-operation of the British cabinet. Let me be bold enough to assert, that in the inevitable consequences of the existing state of parties, Great Britain hoped and trusted that Ireland would see the necessity of an union. The administrations of

Lord Townshend, of the Marquis of Rockingham, and of Lord Westmoreland, successively passed away without any thing material being done. The phantoms, the shadows of royalty, they stalked across the stage to please the vanity of the Irish nation with the parade and intrigue of a Court. The Presidency, however, of the latter Viceroy, Lord Westmoreland, is remarkable for a faction called the Orange party, and the conspiracy of the United Irishmen, taking their rise under it. In the principles upon which these two cabals were formed, and in the history of their proceedings, may be distinctly traced the immediate causes of the Irish rebellion. The Orange party was formed to perpetuate the abuses and oppressions of the government, by discountenancing every innovation. The



United Irishmen marshalled themselves on the other hand, not merely to reform all abuses (for, had they proceeded no farther, they would have merited the highest applause), but also to carry innovation to the extent of separating the country from Great Britain, and making it a free, integral, and independent republic.

The narrative of the collision of these two parties till an explosion took place, may be comprised in a few words. Lord Westmoreland in a speech from the throne recommended the claims of the Catholics to be taken into immediate consideration, and the expectation of their complete emancipation (as it was figuratively called) ran very high. The impulse of all disinterested men was greatly in favour of the measure. The best share



of the talents on both sides of the water was exerted in its behalf. Burke\* wrote and spoke for the Catholics, and sent his only son over to Ireland; and the whole eloquence of the British House of Commons was roused in their behalf. To oppose this, the aristocracy of Ireland proceeded to 'array an army of their own.' They openly avowed themselves determined to shed the last drop of their blood before any concessions should be made to the Catholic body. In this opposition

\* The zeal which this great man (who is now no more, but who will live in memory as long as the language which he wrote in shall be spoken or read, and as long as there shall be any taste remaining in the world, or any admiration of the purest ethics taught in the most enchanting and bewitching style) displayed throughout his whole life and till the hour of his dissolution, in behalf of his distressed countrymen the Catholics of Ireland, must evince, even to the most sceptical, if not the justice, at least the sincerity, of his exertions.

may be seen the origin of the Orange party.

During the whole of these proceedings in favour of the Catholics, it is obvious that the conspiracy of the United Irishmen was gradually ripening. The abuses of the government were the theme both of public and private discussion, and the hopes of their being reformed were of course great. The United Irishmen artfully fomented the discontents of the people, as an engine to effectuate their own views. They had imbibed their political opinions from the French Revolution, and were closely connected with the partisans of it (by an accredited representative at Paris), whose views of disorganization completely corresponded with their own. This threatened to prove the source of the utmost disorder to the state,

The tide of republicanism in Ireland ebbed and flowed according to the success of its friends on the continent. When the allied armies retired from the French territory in the autumn of the year 1792, it was at its highest pitch. Eternal war was declared against all Kings by the friends of Liberty. The United Irishmen marshalled their corps, and displayed the emblems of sedition in the streets and squares of Dublin, and in the full face of the noon-day. A national Guard was formed upon the plan, and even with the uniform, of that of Paris. The nation was attempted to be roused by seditious publications and addresses; and Dunganon, where the volunteers of Ireland had a few years before asserted the independence of the country, was re-appointed the spot where the voice of Liberty was



once more to be heard. During the whole of these proceedings the arm of government seemed palsied, and the nation looked on, appalled spectators of the scene. The steadiness of the physician seemed overpowered by the very aspect of the disease. It appeared as if little more than the cast of a die was to determine whether Revolution or Treason was to be the watch-word of Ireland.

At length, however, the government took courage; proclamations were issued forbidding armed assemblies of the people, and some of the conspirators were seized. Hamilton Rowan, their ostensible leader, was brought to trial; others fled to France; and the proceedings of the conspiracy, though not less vigorous, became however less open. They had coupled their cause with that of the Catholics; and every



exertion which was made for that oppressed body was paving the way to the designs of the conspirators. They therefore endeavoured to rouse the Catholics, as the instrument by which the constitution both in church and state was to be completely overturned. But, to the honour of that great body be it recorded, the loyalty of the far greater part of them was proof against these artful machinations. The Catholics felt themselves attached to a constitution of King, Lords, and Commons. They therefore renounced all coalition with the conspirators, and preferred their humble claims to Parliament, to be admitted within the pale of a constitution which they were ready to defend with their lives and fortunes.

This was during the corrupt administration of the Earl of Westmoreland.

The petition of the Catholics was presented to his Majesty, and by him was graciously received and referred to the parliament of Ireland. The justice of their claims being supported by able friends on both sides of the water, made this the period in which those concessions which they have obtained, were made to them, and those harsh disqualifications which formerly attended them were in a great degree repealed.

Such was the state of parties when Lord Westmoreland was recalled, and the administration of Earl Fitzwilliam commenced. All the circumstances relating to that event are, however, so fresh in the recollection of every man, that it would be abusing your patience if I were to attempt to recapitulate them. Suffice it to say, that the sudden recall of that amiable

nobleman, at the moment when the expectations of Catholic emancipation were at their full height, and made the avowed object of his administration; contributed not a little to bring the affairs of Ireland to a speedy crisis. Nothing could have happened more opportune to the United Irishmen. If we are only to consider this recall as the precursor of that desolating civil war which ravaged Ireland, it is undoubtedly much to be lamented. But if, on the contrary, we contemplate it as one of those measures which was to prepare the kingdom for a full and final settlement of its political and religious interests (although that object was not at the time sufficiently ripe for avowal), it seems to me that the wisdom and necessity of it cannot but be acquiesced in.

The conspiracy of the United Irishmen,



notwithstanding the obstacles it had met with, had now however become ripe for explosion, and the virtuous Lord Camden's administration was to be the unhappy epoch of it. At the head of this plot was an 'Executive Directory,' under the controul and superintendence of which were 'Provincial and Baronial Committees,' scattered over the greater part of the country. They had their 'affiliated societies' in different parts of the three kingdoms, with which, and with the government of France, they kept up a regular and frequent correspondence. The train was laid throughout England, Scotland, and Ireland; but fortunately the explosion only took place in the latter country.

Seditious harangues and publications have been called by Lord Verulam the



sister of rebellion; and the observation is founded in human nature, and confirmed by uniform experience. ‘The poets therefore (says this great man) fabled Fame, or that swift plague Rumour\*, to be the youngest *sister* of the giants who warred against God†. For rebellious actions and seditious reports do not differ in nature or kind, but as it were *only in sex*; the one being masculine and the other feminine.’ Whoever examines the rise and progress of the society of the United Irishmen will not require any further confirmation of the truth of what I have before asserted. Whoever reads the addresses and declarations with

\* Fama *Malum* quo non aliud velocius ullum.

† Illam Terra parens, ira irratata deorum,  
*Extremam*, ut perhibent, Cæo Enceladoque  
*sororem*  
 Progeniit,——

which the press was daily teeming, cannot entertain a doubt that the United Irishmen were the fomenters and the instigators of the rebellion. They poured forth the distresses of the people, and taught them to be discontented with the existing government of the country. But this lesson had been long fully learnt. They therefore studied how to exaggerate the evils which the people suffered, and to make light of those advantages which they perhaps did enjoy. Whilst they endeavoured to exasperate their minds to a pitch of phrenzy, they professed their own views to be most disinterestedly patriotic.

This fungous association took upon themselves the piloting of the state vessel through the storms and tempests of a revolution. They made pikes, formed dépôts of muskets and ammunition, and cast

cannon, which they carefully concealed till it should be wanting. They tampered with the soldiers to seduce them from their allegiance, and solicited and obtained a promise of assistance from the French.

Backed and encouraged by the forward state of their preparations, the society issued declarations, purporting that ‘Universal Emancipation, with a Representative Legislature,’ was their ‘polar principle.’ The King and the House of Peers, together with the ecclesiastical establishment, were therefore left to their fate. In the bombastic jargon of French Republicanism, they invited a ‘compact’ of Presbyterian and Catholic; that ‘provincial conventions’ should assemble, and elect ‘delegates’ to confer with those chosen by protestant bodies of a ‘similar nature and organization.’ They avowed that



nothing would satisfy them but ‘immediate, ample, and substantial justice to the Catholics;’ but they declared at the same time they considered *that* merely as the ‘portal to the temple of National Freedom\*.’

Unfortunately for Ireland, the Catholics of some few counties listened to these artful invitations; but the Presbyterian interest stood aloof, and refused its co-operation. Neither would any of the Catholic body have joined the association, if the eloquent exertions of the Earl of Moira had been listened to in the parliament of his native country. The critical

\* See the Address of the Society of United Irishmen at Dublin, to the Volunteers of Ireland, signed by Archibald Hamilton Rowan, as Secretary, and fully proved on his trial. Also the other papers annexed to the report of the Secret Committee of the House of Lords in Ireland—August 1798.



and dangerous state of public affairs at this time was seen into and predicted by that virtuous nobleman. With the most patriotic enthusiasm, he hurried over from Great Britain to his native country, and in his place in the Legislature of the kingdom, proposed conciliatory measures to allay the threatening discontents. But the infatuation of the Irish Parliament prevented his advice being attended to.

Nothing then could prevent the bursting of the impending storm.

The unhappy peasantry of Wicklow, Wexford, and the adjoining counties, groaning under the weight of their oppressions—misled by the artifices of their own priests—flattered with the assurance of repossessing those estates of which their ancestors had formerly been plundered—and assured that they would enjoy them

again under the protection of a 'Catholic Republic'—listened to the delusion, and promised their warm co-operation. The names of many great men were made use of to encourage them by their examples; some of whom in fact secretly abetted all these proceedings. Great assistance was promised from the French, if it should be necessary; and the landing which at that time had been recently effected by some troops of that nation at Bantry-Bay, served to countenance the delusion. But all this would have been insufficient to bring the Catholics into the field, if it had not been industriously circulated by the United Irishmen, that the Orange party was instituted in order to exterminate them. It was represented, that the Protestants had entered into a 'solemn league and covenant to destroy them, and

that they had sworn to wade up to their knees in Popish blood\*.' The day when the massacre was to commence was even mentioned. This artful insinuation and most ingenious device completed the momentum of disaffection which before there was little to restrain: this artifice brought the Catholic peasantry into the field at the time fixed on by the conspiracy for a general rising †.

I am sorry to be obliged to confess, that there was but too much appearance of reason to justify the Catholics in giving ear to this suggestion of a massacre. Orange lodges were spread over the counties in which the rebellion broke out, more numerously than through the other

\* See the Report of the Committee of the House of Lords. The truth of this fact I had many opportunities of ascertaining.

† The Rebellion broke out the 23d of May, 1798.

parts of the kingdom. Oaths were administered to those who enrolled themselves of that party; the nature and purport of which the peasantry were unacquainted with, but which they were led to believe were for the design of exterminating them. Neither is there any doubt but that such a wish has been professed by many of the Orange party. I am sure I have heard it declared, and so must every man who has at all mixed in society in the country, that Ireland would never be at rest till the Roman Catholics were completely exterminated. Such a sentiment has even been avowed in the public deliberations of the Legislature. I was not indeed present to hear it myself, but I have not the least reason to doubt of the fact. The charge has been publicly made by others, and has never yet been denied.



The well informed author of a respectable publication, on the state of affairs in Ireland in the year 1799\*, has this remarkable passage: ‘And though there may be men of ferocious minds who would exterminate the natives; though I have heard an atrocious policy avowed in the public councils, by which they were to be armed and let loose upon each other; though I have heard the offer of Union condemned as a remedy inadequate to the evil, and the salvation of the few asserted to depend upon the extermination of the majority; that the Catholics must be extinguished and put out; that not a single Rohilla of them all can be left with impunity; though *I have heard these sangui-*

\* Considerations on the State of Public Affairs in the year 1799. Ireland, p. 63.

*nary doctrines pollute the walls of a House of Parliament, yet I am satisfied that they are confined to a few breasts not wickeder than they are weak.'*

What answer does the Orange party make to this charge, which stands thus openly upon record? They refuse to plead to the indictment; they stand obstinately mute: their guilt must therefore be taken *pro confesso*\*. The inference is, that the miserable peasantry, in giving credit to the assertion of a massacre, acted upon good collateral evidence, which, when added to the positive proof (for such it must have appeared to them) which *forged* Orange oaths, purporting a massacre, pro-

\* I find that Dr. Duigenan, in his 'Present Political State of Ireland,' published since the first edition of these letters, actually quotes the above passage, but to my great surprize does not attempt to answer it.—*Note to 2d edit.*

duced; must entirely acquit them of every crime. It must evince their conduct to have been nothing but an exertion of the mere right of self-defence; that right which no law can take away, because it is paramount to all law; that right which no aristocracy can overthrow, because it has for its basis human nature. It must reduce their criminality to the fault of possessing too great a share of credulity. The most improbable suggestions have at all times been easily palmed upon the Irish peasantry. The dreadful massacre which took place in the year 1641 was brought about by similar means. It was then, as in the present case, industriously circulated throughout the kingdom that the Protestants (and particularly the Presbyterians, who at that time had emigrated to Ireland in great numbers) were

about to exterminate the Catholics. What will not apprehensions of this sort perform, when backed by the impulse of religious enmity? Till education therefore has removed this association of ignorance, credulity, and superstition, in the lower classes of the community in Ireland, there can never exist any perfect security against insurrections.

This is a ‘round unvarnished tale’ of the circumstances which led to the Irish rebellion. In that unhappy contest, brothers were armed against each other’s lives, and children against those of their parents. Ireland will long feel the effects of it—*Crudum adhuc vulnus medentium manus reformidat*. Peace was however at length purchased (if indeed that dreadful scene which slaughter and desolation produce deserves the name of peace); it



was purchased with little less than the loss of one hundred thousand lives. Of these about nine-tenths were of the insurgents; the loss of the royalists being about 10,000 men.

After the great victories which were gained at Vinegar-Hill and some other places, the triumphs of the Orange party were now complete. The hue and cry of Popish plot and Catholic rebellion was immediately vociferated. Not even the high-church mobs in the time of Sacheverel could have exceeded their religious zeal. It betrayed them into excesses which generous enemies would have been ashamed of. It was like Philip of Macedon dancing on the field of battle, and insulting the dead bodies of his enemies, after his victory at Cheronæa. They talked of a restoration of the whole of the

black code of penal laws which had ever been enacted against Popery. The statute book was again to be disgraced and branded with those stains which for some years the legislature had been gradually purging it of. Popish recusant convicts were to be again introduced to the acquaintance of Irish law, with all the penalties and punishments attached to them. The exercise of the Roman Catholic religious worship was also to be prohibited under severe penalties and punishments. Fresh life was to be given to laws against the Catholics which had become dead letters, and fresh heaps were to be piled on those which already existed, ‘*Immensus aliarum super alias acervatarum legum cumulus.*’

But I trust you will feel convinced, that the stigma cast on the Roman Catholics was unmerited and unjust; that

there is neither any thing now existing in the nature of that persuasion, or in the dispositions of its professors, which ought to check that spirit of liberality and humane toleration which has honoured the reign of his present Majesty, and which is every day gaining ground in Europe. It is pleasing to compare that ‘mild spirit of philosophy which has adorned the present reign, with the harshness and severity which cast a melancholy gloom over some of the most brilliant periods of British history.’ I do not plead the cause of Superstition, or of its nursery and hot-bed, the Church of Rome. I am in this particular at least the advocate of human nature. It is to assist in overturning superstition that I have directed my aim; for the readiest road to this object appears to be the abolition of all those opprobrious

distinctions which are the very batteries and bulwarks of intolérance.

The Irish rebellion did not originate in religious differences, however they might contribute to inflame it in its progress. The earthly passions of malice and ambition were undoubtedly heightened by 'the flame of theological discord;' but they were not created by it. They were created by those oppressions under which I have described the peasantry as existing. Upon a populace with minds so desirous of innovation, not merely for the sake of innovation, but of relief from their miseries, the principles of Jacobin Liberty and religious zeal must have acted with a powerful purchase. *The Catholics became therefore the tools, and the Society of United Irishmen were the busy workmen of the rebellion.* Priests and traitors kindled the



spirit of bloody and implacable hostility, by blowing the trumpet and lighting the firebrand of religious war. Christianity has in all times (and almost in all countries) since its establishment, been made the fulcrum by which those who were its pretended friends, but who were in fact its greatest enemies, have disturbed the quiet of the world. In this case, it is probable that the motives of these priests and of these traitors were different from each other. I will venture to assert, that the motives of the multitude differed alike from both. They all co-operated in one common design of overthrowing the government; but success would have soon thrown afunder such ill-jointed materials. It is well known that the Catholics would have soon shaken off their connexion with the apostles of French

Freedom\*. But the fortune of the kingdom prevented our witnessing the horrid scenes which must have followed their success. They both sunk together in one gulph; they both fell sacrifices to 'the fire-eyed maid of smoky war.' May the nation learn to avoid a repetition of these horrors! May they learn the important lesson of removing those grievances which must again lead to them! It is the melancholy task of the historian to paint the scene; it is the business of the legislator to profit by the event. Posterity demands that the hard-earned lessons of experience should not be thrown away. Posterity requires that the cause of knowledge, truth, and justice, should every day ad-

\* This appeared from the confession of several of the rebels who were made prisoners and afterwards hanged.

vance, for upon that advancement must depend the happiness of mankind, both moral and political.

I am, &c. &c.

## LETTER VI.

ON THE CONSTITUTION OF 1782.

*My dear Sir,*

It has often happened that the principle upon which either an individual or a nation acts may be good, when the measure adopted in consequence of it is far from deserving an equal share of commendation. I consider this to have been precisely the case with the Irish nation in the year 1782. It had long laboured under the grievance of being bound by laws, in the making of which it had no



share. and of being crippled in the passing of those which its own internal legislature deemed necessary. Great Britain had always considered the country as a dependant and subordinate kingdom, which it had conquered, planted, and civilized ; and which of course could have no farther claims than to the clemency of the victor. They had found the island in a rude and barbarous state, not even the Romans, that banditti which had pillaged almost all the rest of the world, having ever penetrated into it to carry civilization along with slavery. Great Britain had therefore never thought of communicating, as its right, all the advantages of that free government and sovereign legislative authority which she herself was in the enjoyment of.

Molyneux, the friend of Locke, had in

vain stood forward in the behalf of his unhappy country. The excess of his zeal was perhaps the principal occasion of his ill-success. He participated in that ardent love of freedom which pervaded his English contemporaries, which had reared the fabric of their liberties, and brought about a declaration of their rights. The writings of Locke had perhaps fixed the political opinions of his friend, and determined in his own mind the line of conduct which he should pursue. In pursuance therefore of his determinations he went over to England, and submitted to the examination and judgment of this rival in Fame of the immortal Newton, his logical reasonings on the grievances of the sister kingdom. Locke approved of his conduct and sentiments, and encouraged him in his resolution of publishing them. He

therefore boldly advocated the cause of Ireland, denied the right of conquest which Great Britain claimed over it, and demanded for his country a full share of British freedom\*. It is not necessary that I should enter into the merits of that celebrated production. Whatever faults there may be in the argument (and faults there certainly are), the intentions of the author were pure and patriotic. His enthusiasm however was cried down as the effect of madness, and his writings were condemned to be burnt by the hands of the common hangman.

The period was not yet arrived in which claims of this sort could be successfully made. Another century was to revolve over the heads of the Irish, ano-

\* See his book entitled 'The Case of Ireland,' printed in 1698.

ther generation was to pass away, before they could be heard with effect. Some faint struggles and feeble efforts were indeed made by the parliament of Ireland shortly after the accession of the house of Brunswick to the throne. But they soon died away, and are now only remarkable on account of the imprisonment of Sir Jeffrey Gilbert, an Englishman who at that time filled with honour the high office of Lord Chief Baron of the Court of Exchequer in Ireland. This great man, whose name is justly dear to every lawyer for the literary services which he has rendered to the profession, was committed to prison by the House of Lords in Ireland for maintaining \* the right of the British House of Lords to determine in the last resort appeals from the decisions

\* In the case of Annesley and Sherlock.



of the courts of justice in Ireland. He was however soon released, and an act was passed in the British legislature to deny the appellate jurisdiction of the Irish Lords House of Parliament, and to assert that of the British, and also further to secure the dependency of Ireland upon the crown of Great Britain.

In the new world, the spirit of independence first awoke from her long trance. The genius of Liberty, after establishing the freedom of her hardy sons in that remote quarter of the globe, traversed the Atlantic Ocean, and winged her flight towards Europe. She first alighted upon the shores of Ireland. The influence of that visit ran through the country with electrical rapidity. Ireland was instantly in a flame. As if by the force of magic, forty thousand men suddenly declared

themselves the champions of the liberties of their country. The exigencies of the times had armed these volunteer patriots, and there was no refusing claims which were backed by such irresistible power. They had associated to protect their country from invasion, and they now turned their swords against the very government which they had apparently embodied themselves to protect. The unfortunate administration of Lord North had not sufficient force or courage to withstand the torrent\*. By the declaration of independence, which therefore soon followed, Ireland was reluctantly torn from the bosom of the mother country.

I need not inform you, that by the act which was passed in the twenty-third year of

\* See this unfortunate period depicted by Burke in his letter to the Duke of Bedford.—p. 14.

his present Majesty's reign, it was expressly declared, that the people of Ireland should, in all cases whatsoever, be bound only by laws enacted by his Majesty and the Parliament of that kingdom. Two years before, all pretensions to superiority founded on the statute law had been abandoned. But prior to that period Ireland was bound (when named) by acts of the British Parliament. As a dependent subordinate kingdom, their Parliament was also incompetent to pass laws without sending over to England the heads and titles of them, to undergo the consideration of the English Privy Council. It was even necessary to certify the causes and considerations of holding a Parliament, before it could lawfully be convened.

Appeals also lay to England from the decisions made by their Courts of Law and



Equity, as I have before mentioned. From the Court of King's Bench in Ireland, the appeal was to the King's Bench in England; and from the Court of Chancery there to the British House of Lords.

Ireland enjoyed some of the advantages of the happy genius which had formed the English laws and constitution. The government of the country, though alien to it, was yet a British government, of which freedom was the predominant principle. The laws, though they were of English growth and exportation, were yet famed for their wisdom and mildness. They had been planted by King John, or according to others by his father, Henry the Second, at the Council of Lismore; and the Irish nation had publicly sworn to obey them. Their lawyers were all educated (as they still continue



to be) in our schools of jurisprudence and fountains of municipal law—the Inns of Court. A resort to these original sources, in the form of a British appellate jurisdiction, was therefore wise and commendable. But, independent of its propriety on these grounds, it was highly necessary for the preservation of that sovereign power and interest which Great Britain claimed over Ireland. Supreme judicial and legislative powers are inseparably connected together. Such was the state of the kingdom: but all existing provisions for the government of the country were swept away by the act of independence.

But after what has been said in the preceding letters, I must leave you to determine whether that independence was the measure which was best fitted to promote the happiness of the country.

I grant that much was to be done, but I contend that a false remedy was too hastily adopted. That remedy was totally inadequate to the extent of the evil. It induced the necessity of adopting only half measures for the relief of the nation. An aristocracy was seated on the kingdom, whose minds were averse and whose interests were opposite to those of the bulk of the people. This government was reduced to the disagreeable alternative of either disregarding its own existence and preservation, or else of leaving the oppressions of the people unremedied. If it removed the disabilities under which the great mass of the people, the Catholic and Presbyterian bodies, lay, and admitted them to a full share of the benefits of a free government, it was feared that without the assistance of Great Britain the

Protestant ascendancy would be highly endangered. They had even to apprehend that his Majesty's crown might be voted off his head. The Protestant interest would be merged and lost in the torrent with which the opening such flood-gates would immediately overwhelm them. They had in fact precluded themselves from demanding the aid of the British government, if they were really to be considered and treated as an independent kingdom. If then, on the other hand, that just fear which must follow the giving up any legislative authority out of their own hands prevailed, all the abuses of the old state of things must continue. They might indeed have adopted a 'courageous wisdom,' and admitted all ranks of people to the full benefit of this boasted constitution. But instead of doing

this, they had recourse to a ‘false reptile prudence, the result not of caution but of fear. They sought for a refuge from their fears, in their fears themselves. They considered a temporizing meannefs as the only source of safety. Instead of building the safety of the government upon the interests, the wishes, and the respect of the people, they compromised and truckled with the power which they dreaded, as the only means of drawling out their puny existence\*.’

These observations will be found applicable to almost all the measures which the Irish legislature have adopted. The concessions which have been wrested from them in favour of the Catholics, have obliged the Protestants to join their interest with that of the Dissenters, in order

\* Burke.



to preserve the balance of power. But yet they have never dared to allow a representation of the Catholic body by members of their own religious faith, being conscious that the Protestant power, even in its combined state, would weigh but as a feather in the scale against such representatives. They have therefore endeavoured to make their peace with the Catholics, by repealing the most invidious of the laws against them ; by building and endowing a royal college for the education of their clergy, with other baubles of the same nature. Still however, whilst the latter are precluded from enjoying the essence of a free government, a representation in parliament by members of their own uncontrouled choice and approbation, but, on the contrary, are obliged to choose the tools of the aristocracy and the

declared enemies of their interests, they are little better than in a state of servitude. Still the ascendancy of one party is maintained by the degradation of the other: still those ancient animosities, irreconcilable antipathies, feuds, and rival interests, are perpetuated, which so often have hurried the kingdom into anarchy and confusion.

Neither has much more been done to improve the industry and commerce of the kingdom. Soon after the act of independence, and during the Lord Lieutenancy of the Duke of Rutland, the British Parliament offered certain terms upon which the commercial interests of the two kingdoms should be mutually adjusted. Every thing was offered which was thought at that time at all consistent with the interests of the mother country.

But because Great Britain would not assign over to this independent kingdom all its own commercial advantages, the Parliament of Ireland rejected the proposals altogether. The mistress of the seas was to grant them every thing, or they would accept of nothing. They would not submit to the commercial regulations which we had made or should hereafter make for the better regulation of the trade with our colonies. We offered to allow them to participate in that trade upon the same terms and under the same regulations as we ourselves enjoyed it. Our navigation laws met with no better reception. If it had been the laws of Draco which we were offering them, they could not have been more indignantly rejected. They refused all restricted right of trading, even such as



should only pay a due regard to the charter of our East India Company. It was also considered by the framers of these propositions, that some compensation was justly due for admitting them to any participation of commerce. An annual contribution was therefore required to be paid, in order to make some amends for the loss to the revenue of the country, which would be sustained by a diminution of the duties paid to the English Government. But they rejected the mention of this proposal with contempt and indignation as a public insult. The other propositions shared the same fate. They might have united the commercial advantages of the two kingdoms upon one footing, equal in liberty and equal in necessary restrictions. But they refused to do so. Public interest gave way to



national pride, and to that spirit of intoxication which generally accompanies new-gotten power.

Something however was necessary to be done. As sense had been supplied by sound, and argument by declamation; so substantial benefits were to be supplied by ostentatious parade. The parliament of Ireland, in order therefore to amuse the people, and make them some amends for the want of trade and commerce, erected a magnificent Custom-house and Exchange for their merchants. Thus have they continued stedfastly to adhere to the old maxim of sacrificing the real interests of the country to that popular vanity which so much characterises the nation.

It would be usurping the province of the historian, and quitting that of an

epistolary correspondent, were I to lead you through the detail of the proceedings of the Irish parliament, under the different Lord Lieutenants which the kingdom has had since the period of her independence. These already form a part of the history of the nation. In them, as there will be found much to condemn, so undoubtedly there will be discovered some measures which must be approved of. I cannot, in justice to the Irish legislature, take leave of the subject of this letter, without enumerating some of these latter. The repeal of the test and corporation acts was a wise measure, and has been attended with the happiest consequences. The same may be said of the removal of some of the disqualifications under which the Roman Catholics laboured, as in purchasing land, serving on juries,

with some other particulars of less consequence. They have also endeavoured to amend the corn laws, and to encourage the growth of that article, and consequently the increase of agriculture, by offering bounties. But I am inclined to think that the measure might have been better managed in point of time and degree, which would have insured it better success than it actually has been attended with. But there is one act of this legislature on which I cannot but bestow my warmest commendation. This is the statute for registering memorials of all deeds and incumbrances affecting land, in an office appointed to be kept for that purpose. We have a similar law in England, so far as relates to the counties of Middlesex and Yorkshire. I trust, however, that the period is not far distant



when the legislature of Great Britain will see the wisdom and propriety of extending it to the whole kingdom. It has often appeared to me that this notoriety in the alienation and incumbering of real property, for the security of purchasers, is absolutely required by the old common law of the kingdom; and that even those principles of commerce, wealth, and refinements, which have overthrown, and rendered in a great degree useless, the simplicity of our ancient law, and almost substituted another voluminous code in its place, still more demands this notoriety. The leading feature of this mass of jurisprudence undoubtedly is, that the alienation of land should be as free and unfettered, by entails or other means, as possible, in order to increase the circulation of property and answer the various



objects of barter. Undoubtedly nothing can so much contribute towards this object as the rendering of titles to estates as clear as possible, in order that purchasers may never be intimidated from laying out their money by the fear of dormant claims afterwards starting up to disturb their possession. The only means of preventing this is that which has been adopted by the parliament of Ireland, of rendering a registry of these claims necessary to be made at their first commencement.

But, notwithstanding this and other particular prudent regulations, I trust that what I have before observed must have sufficiently convinced you of the inefficient nature of the constitution of 1782. I shall nevertheless trouble you with a few further observations on that particular.

In consequence of the people being ill-governed, and of their commerce being cramped and stifled, the talents and virtues of the bulk of the nation find no room for exertion or encouragement for cultivation. The road to all the wealth and honours of the state, whether military, ecclesiastical, or judicial, is completely choked up. Every thing is done by parliamentary influence and interest: without it nothing. It would be as easy for the smallest single drop of water to force its way through the strongest dike in Holland, as for individual merit, without any collateral assistance, to force itself into the sunshine of glory through the barriers and obstacles of influence and corruption which are opposed to it.

If we turn from its domestic effects to

examine its consequences on the connection with Great Britain, we shall find it as has been already said, that it has left the single link of unity in the executive power. We cannot then but recollect that the regency business has shewn how slender this is, and how easily endangered. But there are causes which render this tie still more weak and precarious. This is the extraordinary influx of French political opinions. In 1798 these would certainly have broken it completely asunder, if military aid had not stepped in to save it. The rebellion has proved that the mass of the people are averse to the new government, and the long continued endeavours of the common enemy of the establishments of Europe, to lop off this member of the British empire, make some fresh exertions necessary to secure it to us.



But to conclude this review of the merits of the government, the state of the people is a sufficient mirror of those merits; but we have seen its defects by a more minute and analytical examination. By the anatomy of the component parts, we have seen how unjointed are the members of this body politic. But though the Parliament has not been able or willing to bestow on the people the blessings of a free constitution, yet they have erected a Parliament-house, which for splendour has perhaps no equal in the world. They seem to have been sensible that their existence could not be long, and therefore took an early opportunity of committing to carpenters and masons the task of writing their history.

Such is the hasty survey which I have made of this much talked of constitution



of 1782. It appeared like a vessel with gilded beams and painted oars, and purple sails, with her flags, pendants, and streamers floating in the air, but only fit for smooth waters and favourable winds. Whilst these continued—whilst the public mind and public strength were united—the vessel sailed well and made a splendid appearance. But no sooner did the winds arise, the waves foam, and the tempest howl, than it was lost and wrecked almost in its very launch.

I have, you see, taken some pains to describe to you the birth and some of the acts of this independent legislature. In discharging this task, I have briefly laid open the effects which have attended it. Two consequences, however, may yet be distinctly traced from this glorious assertion of Irish liberty. It confirmed the

authority of the aristocracy over the people, delivering them up as slaves to a planter, *to use or to abuse them*. Interest or inclination were left without an appellate jurisdiction, as the sole principles which should regulate its conduct. That parental controul of the British government which before existed, was in a great measure done away. It could no longer moderate intestine disputes, assuage the violence of faction, and from the commanding height on which it stood, look down on the bitterness of party spirit, and because superior to and uninfluenced by it, heal the wounds which it made. But the rage for innovation swept away this power of controul.

The first effect therefore of this new constitution was to fix firmly the *old state of things*, with all the abuses and oppres-

sions with which that state was accompanied. Its other effect was to occasion the most enormous increase of bribery and corruption, in order to enable the executive government to maintain its justification. His Majesty's councils can have no farther weight than what they receive from a system of corruption co-extensive with the independence with which the legislative bodies are invested. Hence it was that their Viceroys have been obliged to stain the honour of the purple, by submitting to numerous indignities. Hence it was that they have been often obliged to create new places to provide for the *friends to Government*; and to lay on taxes, with the produce of which their clamorous cravings might be satisfied. Voters in Parliament must be paid; or, if they could not be bought sufficiently cheap, new



seats must be purchased for those who were wanted to make up the complement of ministerial force. The Lord Lieutenant, who shines with the borrowed light of the Cæsars under the Eastern despotism which prevailed in the decline of the Roman empire, must of necessity support the dignity and power of the purple with which he is invested. But whilst he is cut off from all the support necessary to government ; whilst an independent aristocracy defies his power, or obliges him to truck and compromise with it for procuring its assistance : he stands like an inflated rock, pushed off from its native shore, and left to brave and buffet with the angry winds and billows which surround it. Hence fresh expedients have been resorted to. The slight connection of the two kingdoms was necessa-



ry to be preserved, if it could not be strengthened. Hence it was that Lord Westmoreland, in order to raise money, put up peerages to public auction. Other shifts and artifices have been devised in order to support this system of corruption, till at length it has exceeded all bounds. It has now indeed passed beyond the Rubicon. Some fresh remedy is called for, and that can only be found in a legislative union with Great Britain. In my following and concluding letter, I shall endeavour to give some method to my thoughts upon that important measure.

I am, &c. &c.

## LETTER VII.

ON THE LEGISLATIVE UNION WITH  
GREAT BRITAIN.

*My dear Sir,*

You have remarked in your answer to my last letter, and I think your observation most just, that the present is an age of innovation, big with portentous changes and events of an extraordinary nature. It is indeed so; but whether for the eventual benefit of mankind or not, is a problem too deep for our philosophy. The solution of that question must be left to an all-wise,

though mysterious Providence. It is our part alone to profit by what is passing before our eyes. Indeed it seems to me, that the man who can look tamely on, an unconcerned spectator of the scene which is acting before his eyes, must possess that drowsy stupidity and torpid listlessness of mind which seldom fall to the lot of human nature. There cannot be any excuse for such neglect. There is not any pretext for an individual's thus collecting and folding himself up, as it were, within a circle, with his own private interests and pursuits in the centre. He is rather called upon to consider himself as a link of that great chain which holds together society, and the order of the universe. Remove that link, and the chain becomes broken and imperfect. In the close and compact union of

the component parts of every system, its safety, order, and harmony, will be found to consist.

It is true, that the storm which so lately agitated the political horizon has somewhat abated. We are a little more composed, at least in the North of Europe. We are left at liberty, after the great danger is over, to contemplate the ravages of the tempest, and devise means for our future security.

We may see that it has shaken old Europe to her lowest foundation. The States of Holland, France, and Italy, have been swallowed up in the earthquake, and the shock has vibrated to the very heart of Great Britain and Ireland,

————— Jam Deiphobi dedit ampla ruinam  
Volcano superante domus : *jam proxumus ardet*  
*Ucalegon.*



You who have remained quietly at home under the protecting ægis of a British Government, have not felt those severe convulsions which have laid waste other kingdoms. England, like a tortoise in its shell, as Livy has somewhere remarked of Peloponnesus, found a safe defence in that angry sea which surrounds her on all sides. The storm indeed stood suspended over your heads, and ready to burst upon you. But at last it blew over, and poured its destructive fury upon Ireland. It has desolated this unhappy country, and laid waste its richest and most flourishing provinces. Not even the soft myrtle has escaped the sulphureous bolt which split the ‘unwedgeable and gnarled oak.’ The aged and the infirm, the young and the defenceless, perished in one common ruin. Mothers in vain

pressed their infants to their breasts for protection. All fell in one undistinguishable scene of human carnage. I have visited that unfortunate kingdom, which for an hundred miles in length is one continued *vista* of smoking ruins and desolation. As I travelled on I could not but exclaim,

—————‘ Alas, poor country !

‘ *Almost afraid to know itself!* It cannot  
‘ Be call’d a mother, but a grave : where nothing  
‘ But who knows nothing is once seen to smile :  
‘ Where sighs and groans, and shrieks that rend the air,  
‘ *Are made, not mark’d* ; where violent sorrow seems  
‘ A modern ecstasy : *the dead man’s knell*  
‘ *Is there scarce ask’d for whom* : and good men’s lives  
‘ Expire before the flowers in their caps,  
‘ Dying or ere they sicken.’

And now, whilst the kingdom is impressed with the lively sense of these miseries, whilst the embers of the late commotions are still warm, and whilst it is still smarting under the green forenefs

of its intestine divisions; a Legislative Union with Great Britain is proposed. The mother country opens out her arms to embrace and relieve the child which had deserted her.

I promised to give you my sentiments on this subject; I cannot preface them by any other remark than that the advantages of the proposal appear to me so manifest and obvious, that I cannot for a moment conceive that any thing but the most absurd national pride which distinguishes this people, or the perhaps still more irremoveable sense of private interest influencing the aristocracy of the country in opposition to the public good, should induce a moment's hesitation in accepting such an offer. I know that these two principles will do much, but, I hope, not every thing. I am confident that

interest and vanity will create many obstacles in the way of the Union, but I hope that they will not altogether prevent its completion.

I trust that the letters which I have written from this country, have not left you altogether ignorant of the causes which lead to the Union. It has been my object to give some faint delineation of them. I know that it is a melancholy picture which I have sketched, but I hope it is not altogether an unfaithful one. It has been to me a painful duty, which I owed to truth and justice, to declare my opinion that the government is nothing but 'a painted and gilded tyranny;' the established religion an 'hard and stern intolerance.' I know that they are arrayed in an unfitted magnificence, and covered over with the imposing robes of



independence and freedom. But I have torn away the mask, to discover the real features. I have shewn the nation divided into two parties, which, though they have some features running through the whole, are yet in most particulars as different as nations which go by different names. It must by this time be obvious to you, that the government wants all those balances and counterpoises which serve to fix the state, to give it a steady direction, and to furnish sure correctives to any violent spirit that might at any time prevail;—that it is founded upon the successful violence of a proscribing, and tyrannical aristocracy;—that the lower class of people exhibit the most shocking and disgusting spectacle of mendicancy ever beheld;—that religion, instead of drawing closer the links

of the great chain of creation—instead of connecting man with man, and man with God—has proved the source of the most unparalleled miseries to Ireland.

I would fain be informed, by those gentlemen who are such staunch friends to the independence of Ireland, what are the substantial benefits which have been gained by that independence? It was wrested and usurped from England in a moment of weakness and danger. In that storm in which Ireland deserted us, we lost America, ‘the brightest planet in our political orrery.’ I have always thought the advantages which even America gained by her independence were of a doubtful complexion. But the Irish constitution of 1782 has not to my judgment the least evidence to bring forward in support of its character and

merits. I would ask its friends, whether it did not confirm instead of remove the tyrannic rule of a despotic junto?—whether, when this growing branch was torn from the parent stock, the vicious system of its internal policy was removed?—whether that same misery which drove hundreds of the famished peasantry to America, by the efforts of whose despair the revolt of the colonies proved successful, does not still continue a living monument of the defects of the government?

If these things have indeed been all done, I should then become the sworn foe to an Union, which might injure, but could not improve the kingdom. But knowing that the fact is otherwise, and that the great desertion from the country, even by its own landholders



(who live in England, where they know that both their lives and property are secure, which in Ireland are not so, and who draw after them, out of the kingdom, perhaps a moiety, certainly a third of its annual rent)—knowing, I say, that this emigration is the greatest proof which can be had of the inefficacy of this independence towards insuring the prosperity of Ireland, I cannot but concur most heartily in support of the Union\*.

\* I shall not enter into the much discussed question of the competency of the Irish parliament to consent to an Union. I shall only observe, that it is not necessary to maintain its competency by the doctrine of what has been figuratively called ‘its Omnipotence.’ The power of parliament must be determined by a recurrence to the principle upon which all political power is founded, and that is Utility, or the public good. As *upon* this principle, the power alone depends; so *by it* alone can that power be limited or controuled. For the fallacy of the arguments deduced from all other sources by which the competency of the Irish parliament has been asserted. See ‘The Power of Par-



Let us trace those leading effects which must obviously follow this grand measure. We cannot but be first struck with that multiplication of common strength and means which will arise to the whole empire. Ireland will become an efficient portion of our military, commercial, and financial force, instead of an expensive and weak associate. The aims of the French to separate us will be completely cut off, and the island will be converted into a point of attack against them, instead of a weak quarter at which they have always assailed us.

The aristocracy also of the country, which has so long oppressed the people, will no longer be able to tyrannize over

liament considered,' by ' Henry Maddock, jun. Esq. of the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn.' This small tract, if it does not convince, must at least shew the industry, extensive reading, and ingenuity of the author.

them. By the union of Scotland with England, the inferior ranks of people, says an excellent judge \*, ‘ gained a complete delivery from the power of an aristocracy which had always before oppressed them.’ But this aristocracy is not like that which governed Scotland, ‘ founded in the natural and respectable distinction of birth and fortune,’ but in the most odious of all distinctions, those of religious and political prejudices. It has grown into manhood by means which have perpetually entailed on it the public detestation. The system of confiscation by which it has been fed, has indeed been too much resorted to. It is a system which much eloquence has been exerted in the defence of, but which can never rescue itself from

\* Adam Smith.

the charge both of impolicy and inhumanity. Instead of destroying the means of future disturbances, and plucking them up by the roots, it makes enmities permanent, hereditary, and irremoveable. The causes and sources of civil war are perpetuated. This is the principle which Thucydides laments the effects of in Greece, which the Latin historians deplored in their own time, and Machiavel, many ages after in the republic of Florence. It is now a 'salient living spring' of misfortunes to Ireland.

The poorest of the people are neither so ignorant as not to know that the punishments of their ancestors are entailed on their posterity, or so unfeeling as not to smart under a sense of such injustice. There is a sense of right and wrong, of justice and injustice, which is implanted by nature in the breasts of the most unci-



vilized barbarians. ‘Ask the most untutored child whether the seed which the farmer sows in the earth is his own, and whether the robber who assassinate him acquires thereby a just title to it? All the legislators of the world will not give you a better answer.’ Neither can any moral causes altogether eradicate this principle of justice, which the Almighty seems so universally to have implanted amongst men. The Irish peasant is conscious of it, notwithstanding his humiliated condition; ‘notwithstanding the elephants of government are treading him to death.’ It exists therefore, it flourishes ‘in spite of all the passions which combat it; in spite of those tyrants who would drown it in blood; in spite of those impostors who would extinguish it in superstition\*.’

\* See Voltaire’s *Essai sur les mœurs*.



From father to son therefore is carefully transmitted a knowledge of the estates which the family was formerly possessed of. Each child, like a young Hannibal, seems sworn to die or to recover them. To resist this unextinguishable spirit of enmity, it is necessary to refuse them all share in the government. A local aristocracy is *obliged* to oppress them. But an Union will safely afford the means of redressing these long established grievances. The benefits of the constitution of Great Britain will be communicated to the poorest cabin in Ireland. The people will emerge from their slavery into the dignity of a free nation. That government, the endeavour to overturn which has cost them so many rebellions and massacres, will depart in peace. Harmony will be restored to the kingdom, if

indeed it ever was in possession of it. This grand object, the most desirable of all others, will at least be certainly attained.

2. The effects of an Union on the government are connected with those which it will have on the religious differences of the country. I do confess, that I look forward to the most important advantages in this point of view. Civilization, with her attendant, science, will steal into the hearts of the great mass of the people, and banish that gross superstition which has so long held an empire over them. There is no antidote to this gloomy poison of the mind, so effectual as the wide diffusion of education. From this springs up a generous liberality of sentiment. By this is removed all the mean and all the selfish passions. This it is which spreads far and wide a noble and expanded

view of that great chain which connects man with his fellow creatures. It is the parent of philanthropy and universal benevolence. The heart, in consequence of education, expands its affections from the objects at the family fire side, 'first to its native country,' and 'next to all the human race.' Intolerance flies before it, and like a coward skulks and conceals itself in the 'cell of the monk, or in the breast of the inquisitor.'

If education thus takes wing, bigotry will be removed, that selfish passion which persuades man that he alone is made for heaven and heaven for him. In the place of it, toleration will be established, not only an advantage in itself, but also in its political consequences. Our constitution will receive material improvement. Whilst true Christianity will be enjoyed



as a blessing, and as that mild and humble religion which it originally was sent from heaven, even the political interests of its different sectarists will be preserved, without the tyranny of any one body, or the oppression of the others. That influx of Catholic power, which under the Constitution of 1782 would be subversive of the Protestant interest, will by an Union be attended with no danger of that sort. It will add to our balance of civil power a *balance of religious interest*, and our government of check and controul will be thereby perfected and completed. I trust that by it the tripod of the Constitution will stand upon a still more firm, fixed, and immoveable basis than even it now does. Government and Religion ought to coincide in a tendency to make good citizens. In Ireland they



do not. When the tendency of religion in the least deviates from the end of making good subjects; the tendency of the government towards that object ought to be strengthened. The cause of the Union may be rested upon that argument alone. In that single point of view I think all men will agree in its expediency.

3. Its advantages to the wealth of the country cannot from their nature be made the subject of computation, but the most sanguine expectations may well be indulged on that head. It is certain that agriculture will be much benefited. Those means by which England has raised the state of its agriculture to the height and perfection which it now enjoys, will by an Union be communicated to Ireland. The legislative encouragement of the one country will be extended to the other;

and I augur the most happy effects from them. I figure to myself thousands of the poor of Ireland receiving employment and food from the increase of tillage lands. By increasing the stock of industry in this channel alone, the wealth and happiness of the people and the power and finances of the government will be greatly improved. But when we come to add the weight of British capital into the scale, the effects must promise to be most extensively beneficial.

This cannot but be attracted over by the security which it before wanted and will then have received. Every road to profitable speculation in Great Britain has been long filled with adventurers, and this notwithstanding the infinity of modes in which it is exerted. Ireland, after the Union, offers a new field to the

merchant, and no doubt can be entertained that it will be instantly occupied. The genius of speculation can never leave unattempted so fair a prospect of advantage. With the convenience of ports and navigable rivers, but what is perhaps above all, with the excellent situation of Ireland for a trans-Atlantic trade, it must become the emporium of the produce of the New World.

This influx of capital will in a proportionate degree increase the stock of public industry, and animate the agricultural and commercial interests. In a few years one of the happy fruits of this will be, that we shall not only see British subjects settling in Ireland to enjoy the advantages of her ports, her havens, and her natural wealth; but we shall find a period put to that annual emigration of thousands of Irish subjects, those children of fortune, or



rather of misfortune, who for want of encouragement to remain at home, have, like the Jews in destiny, been for so many years dispersed and scattered over the face of the European world, the hirelings of the ambitious and powerful, or the drudges of the mercenary part of mankind.

Foreign trade can alone create opulent mercantile communities and corporations. The example of England has shewn the advantages which these produce both to the cause of liberty and civilization. They alone can check and controul the encroachments and oppressions of the government. They alone can form a balance against that aristocracy which the landed interest of every nation has a natural tendency to produce. Foreign trade, by establishing powerful mercantile



corporations, creates a rival influence to the wealth and power of the nobility. The commons of England have by these means risen into notice, and gradually formed themselves into the most considerable branch of the legislature.

It is a mistaken and Machiavelian policy upon which the Irish government has been hitherto permitted to proceed. It has been conceived that those superfluous hands which Great Britain employs in foreign trade, are in Ireland made subservient to the greatness of the state, by affording an inexhaustible supply to our fleets and armies. But nothing is so easy as to prove that this policy is not only violent and barbarous, but even erroneous and absurd. The more labour is employed beyond the mere necessities of life, the more powerful is the state; since the

persons engaged in that labour may be easily converted to the public service. By imposing a tax, the people are obliged to retrench in some of those superfluities which they can best dispense with. Those whose labour has been employed about these luxuries must either enlist in the troops, or, by turning themselves to agriculture, thereby oblige some labourers to enlist for want of employment \*.

Thus does a sovereign raise an army or man a fleet. By this principle, the lasting happiness of the subject is not sacrificed to the mere temporary greatness of the state, but made to coincide with it. Governments not only find their interests promoted by these means, but must invariably discover that their real strength altogether depends on them. Commerce,

\* Hume's Essay on commerce.

which affords subsistence to great numbers of subjects, thereby increases the population of the country, and the wealth of the revenues. When I have considered these things, I have been at a loss to discover how the real interests of Ireland could have been so long unattended to. I have wondered how that Spartan policy of building the greatness of the state on the poverty of the people could have been so long practised by a great commercial nation. Those brave troops who have recruited our armies from Ireland, would, if commerce had been extended over it, have been doubled in their numbers by that increase of the population which must have ensued, because invariably the effect of this policy.

One considerable effect which must also ensue from these means, if by an



Union they are carried into execution, will be the lowering the interest of money in Ireland. There is no greater proof of the poverty of a nation than the high rate of interest. But the increase of industry and commerce will remove the circumstances from which high interest for the loan of money is invariably found to proceed. They will lessen the demand for borrowing, and they will afford greater riches to supply that demand. Plenty is always found to diminish the value of money.

There is no truer maxim of policy than that to make a people richer is the way to make subjects happier, and the state more powerful. If the Union therefore is to be considered as an alliance of property, a marriage '*cum pondere et libris*,' in which the value of the dowry is alone to be looked to; it is impossible that the



objection can be on the part of Ireland. A wealthy suitor offers his hand, and all the inducements of riches operate in a ten-fold degree. Ireland is miserably poor; thousands living in a state without industry must necessarily exhaust it. Russia has emerged from barbarity in proportion as commerce has extended itself there. The same effects must arise from similar causes in Ireland. An alliance of the richest and most commercial country in Europe, with one that is perhaps without exception the poorest, must raise its prosperity to a level with the height of that of the superior state with which it unites.

4. I trust that the history of Irish rebellions will also by this measure receive a final period. The oppressions of government will be removed, the progress of Jacobinism checked, and the prejudices

of religion eradicated by the flow but certain progress of civilization. ‘*Le Commerce* (says Montesquieu) *guérit des préjugés destructeurs.*’ When an enlightened method of considering religion is introduced and ordained by the state, no man will be persecuted for his scruples of conscience. Peace and brotherly love will be restored to a country which for many centuries at least has been a stranger to it, and amidst this smiling scene of general joy and happiness—

———“ Every man shall eat in safety  
Under his own vine what he plants, and sing  
The merry songs of peace to all his neighbours.”

A Legislative Union recommended by such important advantages to Ireland, I think, cannot require any farther argument in support of it. As far as my own observation and experience in the country

go, the benefits which I have enumerated must ensue. Great Britain will also receive her proportionate share in the common prosperity : *Neque suæ solum auxilium petit salutis, sed conjunctim.* An Union, whilst it promises to Ireland the solid benefits of law and policy, of trade and manufacture, of arts and sciences, will, by the accession of strength, render Great Britain equal to the weight of a powerful empire, and of the contests in which it may be engaged. It will raise a powerful colossus, which, resting one foot upon the Irish shore, and the other upon British soil, whilst it bestrides the intermediate channel, shall strike terror into our enemies, and be fully able to cope with that 'tremendous spectre which has stalked out of the tomb of the murdered monarchy of France\*.' It will enforce our

\* Burke.

just claims to be considered the mediators and arbiters of Europe. Whether the interested speculations of Great Britain on her part, prove fallacious or just; still it must be owned that they are equitably entertained. The fleets of Great Britain are manned and fitted out, and victualled by the powerful assistance of Ireland. ‘A multiplication of these resources is therefore justly desirable. But is it not evident that this increase in the population and produce of Ireland which is aimed at by the Union, is much more materially benefiting that country than the nation which promotes them? The reason is obvious. National strength and resources are solely obtained by Great Britain: but Ireland, at the same time that she partakes of these, together with the protection and glory which attend



them, enjoys in addition, a multiplication of all the necessaries, comforts, and luxuries of life. The question is the same in some respects as between the market and the consumer. To the latter the industry of the former is but a transient advantage; but to the market accrue all that wealth and diversity of benefits which successful labour affords.

The subsisting connection between Great Britain and Ireland is weak, imperfect, and ill cemented. I cannot but confess that I have long looked upon the present government of the two kingdoms as a sort of double-headed monster. It is such a political Cerberus as history, whether civil or natural, never described. It is only fit to adorn the museum of a virtuoso, or one of the pigeon-holes of the Abbé Sieyès. If the interests of the two

kingdoms have (as is universally agreed) been long united, I assert that it is impossible for that community of interests to be well governed by councils separate and independent of each other. This partnership of property should be directed by an authority wholly entire and undivided. I would allow it as many faces as Janus, as many eyes as Argus, and as many hands as Briareus ; but it should only be directed by one head. Hitherto we have had in Ireland an unwieldy and ill-constructed, and then a wounded and crippled body to drag after, rather than to aid us. We cannot both prosper unless inspired by the virtue, guided by the wisdom, and commanded by the word, of one legislature. I had rather that a common superior should be chosen by the neighing of horses, or the casting of lots, than that we should remain thus divided.

Experience has demonstrated the advantages of the union of states, considered as an abstract question. The Romans gained the world by union amongst themselves and with other nations. Their enemies lost their liberties by divisions amongst themselves and with each other. Wherever the Roman soldier conquered, he made friends and citizens for his country. I will not urge the union of the Provinces of Holland against Philip the Second, or of the States of America against George the Third. They have been sufficiently commented upon, together with the more remote examples from our history, of the Heptarchy, of our Union with Wales, and lastly of that with Scotland. We shall find that the same principle has been invariably attended with similar advantages both in ancient

and modern history. Had it been still more consulted, the page of history would not be so full of the miseries of nations. Swisserland would now have been in possession of its liberty, if the cantons had been firmly united. Germany, though a great and powerful empire, would yet, if better united under one head, be the dread and envy of Europe. At present the disputes of the different states have tended to weaken the whole, and to subject it to the insults and attacks of foreign powers. I might thus run through the whole list of European kingdoms, and I am sure I should find in the history of each of them some argument drawn from its experience in favour of union. Italy has long been a dreadful example of the want of Union. If a firm co-operation had taken place, it is probable, that she



would never have been the prey of her formidable Gallic neighbour. How often is this lesson inculcated in the writings of the politic Machiavel? How much, and yet how fruitlessly has he deplored the disunion of the different states of Italy, ascribing it to the ambitious aim of the see of Rome after temporal power\*? But in latter times this ambitious spirit has not existed, and yet their union has never taken place. Spain too was formerly distracted by a number of independent states and principalities within its domain. The union of the kingdoms of Castile and Arragon, by the marriage of Isabel and Ferdinand, removed much of this evil. The consequence of this happy union was

\* Machiav. Discorsi, l. i. c. xii. and Delle Historie Fiorent. l. i.

the overturning of the kingdom of the Saracens, which had maintained its ground in Spain for a period of 700 years. From this event the rise of the greatness of the Spanish monarchy may be dated. It is well known to what power it rose under Charles the Fifth. The liberties of Europe were considered in danger. But the union of the States of Flanders during the reigns of his two successors was the means of preserving Europe. The independence of Holland was achieved by the bravery of the Dutch, the wisdom of their burgomasters, and the union of their several provinces in one common cause. The independence of Portugal completed the decline of the Spanish monarchy.

Thus we see that union was the means of raising the Spanish power, and the neglect of continuing that system the cause

of its decay. By seizing this neglected principle, the Spanish Netherlands and Holland recovered their liberties, and the balance of power in Europe was once more preserved.

But if we look into the history of the more northern states of Europe, we shall find a case more exactly in point. I allude to the famous constitution of Calmar, in 1397, by which the three kingdoms of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, were united, and consolidated into one under Margaret, the Semiramis of the North. Had this union continued in force, instead of being dissolved by the jealousies and dissensions of the several members of it, the splendour of the North of Europe would not have so declined. These three kingdoms have been less noticed by philosophers than even their present insignifi-



cance will warrant. It is well known that the brave assertors of the liberties of the world issued from these frozen climes, and overturned the gigantic fabric of Roman despotism. Liberty was born the hardy child of the North, and has always proved faithful to and worthy of her origin. All the free governments of Europe may trace their descent from a Gothic root. In their several histories many an important lesson may be read to illustrate the proposition with which I set out, that the Union of the three kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland, cannot be too much recommended. If the union of Calmar had continued in force, instead of dissolving by the banishment of Christian the Second in 1523, those three northern kingdoms would have anticipat-



ed our claims to be considered the political arbiters of Europe.

I think it has been sufficiently proved, that the connection between the two countries has been hitherto raw and ill-cemented—That the constitution of 1782, leaving the single tie of a common Executive Power, is not that sort of union which history has often presented cases of between other states. In those cases there were no independent legislative bodies invested with that great power which results from the principles of a British constitution, to fetter and clog the beneficial operation of their union under one monarch. The prince was generally in those cases invested both with the legislative and executive powers, or with that sort of influence which virtually gave them to him. But the power of

the King of Great Britain is not sufficient to oblige the aristocracy of Ireland to bow down the stubborn neck of its pride and ambition to the yoke of moderation and virtue. Neither has their successful resistance been founded on any confidence which the *people* might have in them. I am persuaded that the Parliament does not possess the good opinion and confidence of the people. The discontents of the people are too loud to imagine the contrary. We do not see them obedient to the laws, prosperous in their industry, or indeed possessed of any spirit of industry at all. We cannot say that they are united at home, when we see dissensions in all parts of the kingdom, and an universal spirit of distrust and dissatisfaction. We have seen the authority of the Parliament contested, by a powerful rebellion, almost

at the very doors of the Senate House. And though I am one of those who are firmly persuaded that parties are of great advantage to a free state, yet it is not those divisions which prevail in Ireland, it is not such factions as those of the Orange and the United Irishmen, that merit this approbation. Neither do I infer from hence, that where the people are discontented, the government must necessarily be bad. I am not so sanguine an admirer of the popular part of a state as to transfer to it that maxim of the English constitution applicable to the regal, that it '*can do no wrong.*' I will even concede that the people of Ireland have frequently acted most outrageously. But I must insist, that in all disputes with them and their rulers, the presumption is at least upon a par in favour of the people. 'Ex-



perience (to borrow the observation of a zealous champion\* of aristocracies) may perhaps justify me in going much farther. Where popular discontents have been very prevalent; it may well be affirmed and supported, that there has been generally something found amiss in the constitution, or in the conduct of government. The people have no interest in disorder:—when they do wrong, it is their error, and not their crime. But with the governing part of a state it is far otherwise. They certainly may act ill by design, as well as by mistake.’ ‘*Les révolutions qui arrivent dans les grands états ne sont point un effet du hazard, ni du caprice des peuples. Rien ne revolte les grands d’un royaume comme un gouvernement foible et derange. Pour la populace, ce n’est jamais par envie d’at-*

\* Burke, Vol. I. p. 416. 4to. edit. of his Works.



*taquer qu'elle se soulève, mais par impatience de souffrir\*.'*

Such are the opinions of two great men, who cannot be suspected of any inclination to take the part of the people against their lawful rulers. The question then is as to the proper remedy, and I assert that this can only be found in a Legislative Union with Great Britain. This will unite the people amongst themselves, will eradicate their feuds, and 'soften, blend, and harmonize, the colours of that melancholy picture which Ireland has hitherto presented.' It will remove those internal factions which are more destructive than war, famine, pestilence, or any of the evils which offended Heaven inflicts on the human race—That aristo-

\* Mem. de Sully, Vol. I. p. 133.

cracy which has sprung out of England colonization, but which has long lost all traces of that generosity, humanity, and dignity of mind which characterised the nation from which they derive their pedigree, will recover those lost traits of English character. ‘The child will then assimilate to its parent, and reflect with true filial piety the beauteous countenance of British liberty.’ If a common language receives the aid of an equal government, it must unite by degrees the most widely distant characters.

I have often repeated, that there is much energy in the Irish character. There is consequently much matter to work upon. The energies of the moral world equally afford the means of grand improvements and important purposes of utility as those of the material. As natural

philosophers direct the active properties of air or water, so will wise statesmen those latent energies which are found in mankind. A prudent legislature will tame their wild nature, subdue them to use, and render them the most powerful and most tractable agents in subservience to great views and great designs. But the legislators of Ireland have hitherto been labouring at the wrong end. They have been satisfied with endeavouring to curb the conduct, instead of attempting to mould the disposition and character. When the influence of civilization was only wanting, they were hanging out the law in all its gloomy terrors. They appear to have been unaware of the danger of swelling the code of criminal justice in the country. They seem to have been unapprized that laws should

grow out of the character and sentiments of a people, and not be imposed in direct contradiction and opposition to them. They have not appeared sensible that though human laws may often correct the outward excess, yet they can never form the inward principle—‘*Serendi sunt MORES,*’ was the emphatic expression of Cicero on this subject. Penal statutes may sometimes curb the overt act, but they cannot reach the heart. It remains therefore to be seen whether the combined legislative wisdom of both kingdoms will not adopt a different line of conduct.

I have taken some pains to collect the sentiments of the people of Ireland, upon the subject of this proposed Union. I am happy to find a great majority in favour of it. It must of course be expected that all the seditious and traiterously disposed



partizans of France, the remnants of rebellion, the society of United Irishmen, who would wish to subject their country to the ambitious views of their French neighbour, are irreconcilable enemies to the Union. But amongst the well-wishers to their sovereign and to the British connection, the number of enemies to the measure is very small. The Catholics are decided friends and supporters of the measure, in spite of the remonstrances of a few discontented individuals who assume the voice of the whole Catholic body. I have had many opportunities, since I have been in Ireland, of ascertaining this fact. In travelling through the south-east of the country, the spot where the rebellion most raged, I had frequent opportunities of hearing the sentiments of the peasantry of Wicklow.

and Wexford on the state of affairs. They all profess as much hatred now against those men who instigated them to take up arms, as they formerly did against the Protestant aristocracy of the country. It seems also to be their unanimous opinion, that an Union holds out the prospect of effectual relief to them.

The chief opposition to the measure will be that of the capital. The people of Dublin are generally inimical to it, from motives of interest and pride. Some of them consider that the commercial greatness of the city will be soon eclipsed by Cork and Waterford, which are more advantageously situated for trade, and enjoy better harbours. But the interest of Dublin must give way to that of the kingdom at large. This is supposing that it really will suffer in the event of an

Union, which is however by no means a point agreed on by all parties.

The dissipation of the capital will undoubtedly be diminished, but not the industry and commerce of it. It is said that the removal of the legislature will injure the city, but those who urge this argument are unacquainted with the real sources of the wealth of a city. It is only the removal of men whose fortunes are engaged in trade that hurts a place, by diminishing the capital which puts industry into motion. 'Those who live upon their private fortunes (says the author of the Wealth of Nations) are idlers, and contribute little towards the riches of a metropolis.' If we look to all the capitals of Europe we shall find them poor, unless they derive their wealth from commerce. The trade of Paris is trifling,



and all the parliament towns in France before the revolution were miserably poor. 'It is the same with Madrid, Vienna, and Rome, where the false glitter of a few disproportionately rich individuals makes amends for the poverty of the bulk of the people.' Dublin therefore will not be injured by the seat of legislature being removed to London. It is impossible that it should be otherwise. 'Let any man (continues Adam Smith) who doubts of this, compare the situation of Edinburgh before the Union, when it was the residence of its aristocracy, with what it is now, since it has ceased to be the necessary residence of the principal nobility and gentry of Scotland.'

As for that opposition which may arise from the pride and vanity of any part of the Irish nation, it would be absurd that



it should stand in the way of the measure. Trifling points of honour should not keep us asunder, but rather in their adjustment conjoin us still more closely together. They should not form obstacles to an Union, but as it were clasps and hinges to it. They should constitute a contignation which will link the two edifices together.

I do confess, my dear friend, that I look forward with peculiar pleasure to this measure, which shall unite the hitherto discordant members of our political greatness; which shall unite all ranks of men, and rally them round the throne. If an army should be under the command of one general, *à fortiori* should two nations under such circumstances as Great Britain and Ireland be under the full command of one entire sovereign authority. Ireland is the right arm of our empire: but

now it seems as if the two hands designed by nature for reciprocal assistance and co-operation were continually impeding and baffling each other; as unfortunate as if the two feet should entangle and trip up the natural body. We cannot both prosper under a divided government. It would be equally possible (or rather impossible) for the human body, though composed of different members, whose offices are different, to be *therefore* governed by the influence of more than one mind. We must be firmly interwoven and knit together in a bond of connection, which shall be broad, comprehensive, and indissoluble. We shall then possess all that combination, and all that opposition of interests; all that action and counter action which in the political as well as in the natural world, from the 'reciprocal

struggle of discordant powers,' draws out the harmony of the universe.

This master-piece of politics, which was the darling project of the illustrious Lord Chatham, will be carried into execution by his still greater son and successor. He is an active and penetrating minister, whose motives I sincerely believe to be patriotic and disinterested. If his love for his country, and his exertions in its behalf, are not shewn in the manner which some individuals would desire, and according to their fashions of thinking and acting, it remains for posterity to determine which is in the right. They will have before them that experience of the effects of his measures, which is at present hid in the womb of futurity. As for ourselves, we are incapable of penetrating into it. Our shortsighted impatience may indeed com-



plain, but it cannot properly judge of his conduct.

If Providence in its wisdom should ordain that the exertions of this minister are to be crowned with success: if to the political salvation of Europe which he promises to effect (and in which if he fails it will only be from the want of proper support, and not from any deficiency in his own natural energies): if to this any fresh glory can be added, or any fresh laurels be gained, it will result from this measure of an Union. The alliance of the three kingdoms, of England, Scotland, and Ireland, will be then firm, when their pursuits and aversions are invariably directed towards the same objects. We shall be then all equally sheltered under the canopy of a common cause. Our connection will be then close and indissol-



luble; a consolidation of force, which shall combine us with a degree of cohesion and firmness, before unknown, into one mighty body, informed by one soul. Our reciprocal interests will rest on the firm pillars of Justice, Religion, Council, and Treasure. National and local distinctions, prejudices and grievances, will be removed; no stings of resentment will be left to rankle in the hearts of a suffering party; all will be melted and blended into one great people, and then at length shall we be able to exclaim with joy and triumph on both sides of the Irish sea—  
CUNCTI GENS SUMUS UNA!

I remain, dear Sir,

Yours, &c. &c.

THE END.

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